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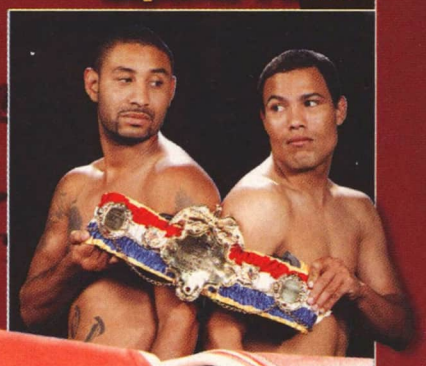

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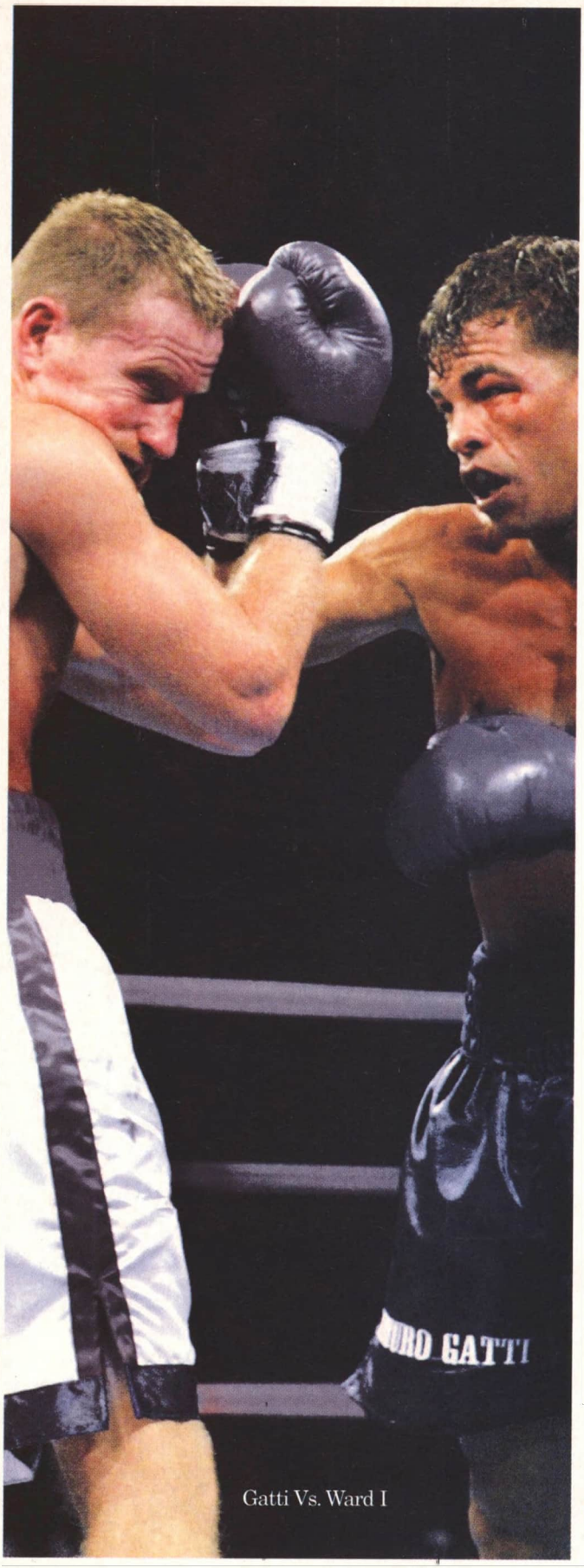

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The RING

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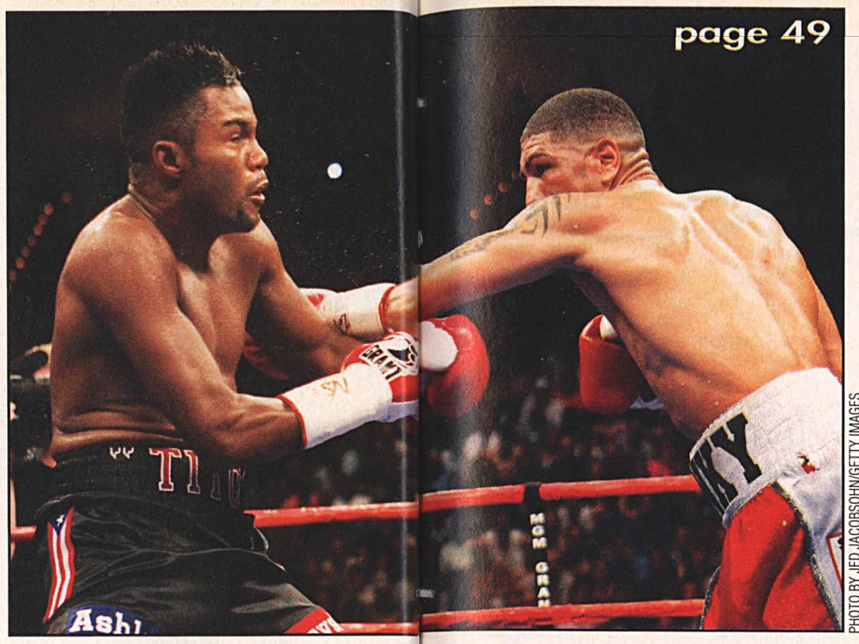

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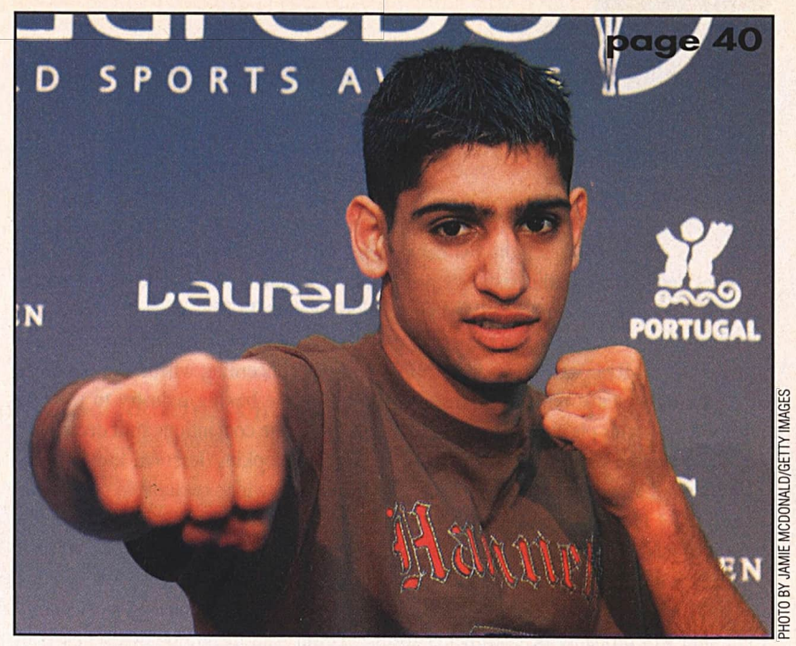

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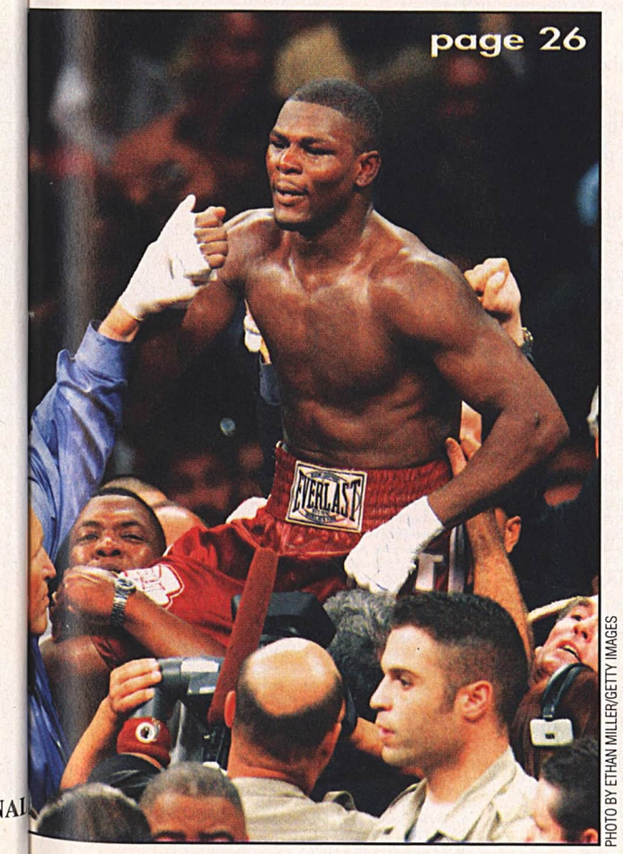

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RINGSIDE

Some time has past since the Jermain Taylor-Bernard Hopkins fight, but debate over who really deserved the decision has not subsided one bit. In this issue's cover story, "Jermain Taylor Is The New Middleweight Champion ... But Is He The Best Middleweight In The World?" *(page 26)*, Joe Santoliquito examines the subject in great detail. Moreover, in "Ryan Out Loud" *(page 16)*, Jeff Ryan asks some thoughtful questions concerning whether or not Hopkins' maverick status and the desire of some within the boxing industry to see him replaced by Taylor played a role, even subliminally, in the contentious split decision.

While I agree with the majority of the media that Hopkins deserved to win (116-114 via my TV scorecard), I feel it was a decision over which reasonable people can disagree. As old-timers used to say, "it was close enough to steal"—and the person most responsible for making it that close was Hopkins.

The controversy should bode well for the rematch, both in terms of viewership and the fight itself. The pay-per-view numbers were better than anticipated for the first fight, and will probably be even better for the return. And there's no doubt that both fighters have added incentive to ratchet up the intensity in an effort to erase all doubt as to who is the better man, which should lead to more action than they provided in the excessively tactical first fight.

Therefore, the controversial nature of the first Taylor-Hopkins could very well prove beneficial in the long run. What's got me worried is what happens afterward.

If Taylor beats Hopkins convincingly in the rematch, things should be fine. But if Hopkins regains the 160-pound championship and then either moves up to challenge the light heavyweight champion or retires, the middleweight title will be splintered into three or four pieces again.

One of the alphabet organizations is already starting to hassle Taylor about defending against a mandatory challenger who means absolutely nothing at the box office. As long as Taylor has a clear-cut claim to the title, only fools and scam artists will pay any attention to the alphabet gang's machinations. But if Taylor loses the rematch and Hopkins exits the middleweight division, it's going to get ugly.

Something similar happened when Ray Leonard beat middleweight champion Marvin Hagler in 1987 and then immediately retired. This led to a situation where there wasn't another undisputed champion in the division until Hopkins beat Felix Trinidad in 2001. While it would be improper for me to root for Taylor (or Hopkins, for that matter) in the rematch, it would be a crime if history repeated itself. The last thing boxing needs is another lengthy period without a unified champion in a division that has historically been the second most prestigious in the sport.

***

Boxing has long been a favorite whipping boy for critics. Sometimes the barbs are deserved, sometimes not. But the really annoying part is that precious few rush to praise when praise is surely warranted. This came to mind when reading the two feature articles in this issue by Brian Doogan: "Amir Khan: The New Face Of British Boxing" *(page 40)* and "THE RING Update" on Barry McGuigan *(page 72)*. In the mid-1980s, McGuigan was a unifying force at a time when Catholics and Protestants were killing one another at an alarming rate in Northern Ireland. Today, Khan, whose parents were born in Pakistan, is helping to bring Christians and Muslims together in the wake of the terrorist bombings in England. This is no small thing, and should give those eager to brand all boxers as either thugs or simpletons a fresh perspective.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

Volume 84, No. 10 December 2005

The RING

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ROUND ONE

UNCOMMON VALOUR

Philadelphia police officer Bo Diaz has run a boxing program for children in North Philadelphia since 2004, and he'd seen his share of hardcore and troubled kids come through the door. Then one day in late-March, Diaz was greeted by someone special—Izzy Burgos. What was unique about the 10-year old boy was that the baggy shirt he wore hid the fact that he had only one arm, his right.

"We wanted to treat Izzy like any other kid, and we taught him how to box with the mitts," Diaz said. "Izzy was well accepted. He fell into the pack of the kids, and he performed better than most of them."

Through word of mouth in the neighborhood, Diaz was familiar with Burgos, who lost his left arm when he was two years old due to a gunshot wound. Burgos worked out for six weeks, hitting the pads and punching bag, but he kept bugging Diaz for an opportunity to spar.

"I was very on top of Izzy's situation and didn't want to place him in a position where he could get hurt," said Diaz. "I was very cautious; we all were. Izzy wanted to compete in the amateur fights in the Middle Atlantic Association, but officials in the organizations told me he couldn't because of his disability. We tried to find special tournaments for boxing, but there was nothing."

With the help of Vernoca Michael, owner of the Blue Horizon, Diaz created an opportunity for Burgos to compete at the legendary Philadelphia venue on the undercard of a June 24 pro show. The fans there couldn't believe what they were seeing. Burgos faced Chris Delvalle, another 10-year-old who was not handicapped and had competed in numerous amateur fights.

Within the first few minutes of action, Burgos was knocked down. But he got up and fought back with his right arm, attacking his opponent and actually backing him up. When the three-round session was over, many among hardened fight crowd were teary eyed after watching this inspirational young man.

Burgos was presented with a championship belt after his fight and the memory of a lifetime.

"Izzy is a survivor, and I know for a fact he taught himself how to ride a bicycle, and he always had it in him that he could succeed at anything," Diaz said. "We would love for him to compete in a regular competition. We'd like to think there could be a doctor out there who could put a prosthetic limb on, so Izzy could compete. That's all he wants."

"I was a little nervous. It's hard to box with two arms, let alone one, so you can imagine how scared I was," said Lisa Burgos, Izzy's mother. "Sometimes, Izzy gets upset because a lot of times he gets told he can't do things. He overcompensates with everything that he does. He has a great attitude, because he won't let someone tell him he can't do something."

—Joe Santoliquito

PHOTOS BY LEWIS BLEIMAN

Burgos fires away against Delvalle at the Blue Horizon

HEARNS RETURNS

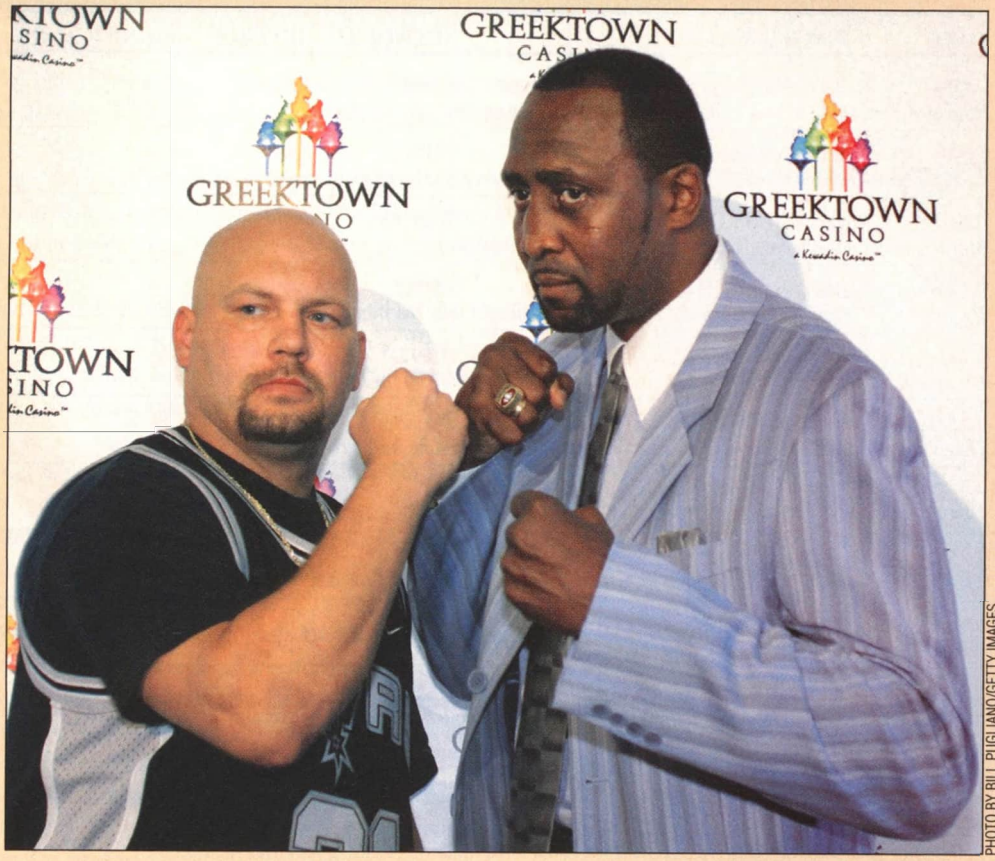


PHOTO BY BILL PUGLIANO/GETTY IMAGES

Long and Hearns square off at the preflight press conference

Julio Cesar Chavez is currently on the final leg of a farewell tour designed to pad the old champ's bank account and familiarize fans with Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.'s prowess. Presumably, when his promoter, Top Rank, has squeezed every possible dollar out of this nostalgic exercise, Chavez Senior will retire to his home in Culiacan and allow Junior to do the fighting.

If only Thomas Hearns would do likewise. But following his first fight in five years, on July 30, the 46-year-old "Hit Man" declared, "This is just a start. I'm planning to fight for a long time."

The last time Hearns attempted such an ill-advised comeback, he suffered a sprained-ankle TKO loss to Uriah Grant, on August 8, 2000. This time Hearns did better, albeit against a lesser opponent, stopping journeyman John Long, 19-7-2 (10), at the end of the eighth round at Detroit's Cobo Hall.

It was far from a glorious comeback. The pudgy-looking Long, 182¼, surprised his famous opponent in the opening round, pinning Hearns, 177, on the ropes and abusing the elder statesman with a number of hard blows to the head and body. At first, Hearns looked sluggish, but he gradually got into the fight, took advantage of his considerable height and reach advantage, and dropped Long in the fifth round. Long was cut over left eye in the sixth and out of gas by the end of the eighth.

Like Chavez, Hearns made it a family affair by having his son, undefeated middleweight Ronald Hearns, also fight on the show. The younger Hearns, who stopped Donald Adams in the first round of a preliminary bout to run his record to 7-0 (5), worked his father's corner, and sounded relieved when it was over.

"It was a lot harder watching my dad fight than having to do my own," said Ronald. "It's been a while since I saw my dad get hit. It's not easy seeing that."

Hearns, however, seemed determined to keep fighting, despite the fact that many concerned people, including his former trainer and manager, Emanuel Steward, advised him not to enter the ring again following the loss to Grant.

"I think I am going to take a month off and then get back at it," said Hearns, who hasn't held a major title since Iran Barkley took the WBA light heavyweight title away from him in March '92. "We'll see what comes. I think I am going to get better each time I get into the ring. This was just the first fight. I got through it and I won. Now we go on."

It's difficult to know where this dangerous fantasy will end. If Hearns continues to pass the medical requirements, state boxing commissions are going to have a difficult time stopping him. But perhaps Ronald Hearns inadvertently supplied a solution when he said: "It's going to be up to the public. They're going to be the final voice."

Unlike Chavez, who has been attracting large crowds for his "Adios" tour, a sparse crowd of approximately 3,000 was on hand for Hearns' latest attempt to recapture the glory of his youth. Hopefully, this was the first murmur of a growing chorus of voices that will soon inform Hearns of his folly in the one way that even a faded legend will understand—by refusing to support it at the box office.

—Nigel Collins

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
7/8/05	Missy Fiorentino W 6 Belinda Laracuente	ESPN2	jl	D	B-	D+
Who else turned this on and wondered why Juan Epstein was fighting a chick?						
7/8/05	Emanuel Augustus KO 6 Ray Olivera	ESPN2	jw	C+	B+	B+
Imagine how much more fun the fight game would be if there were more guys around like Augustus						
7/8/05	Roger Mtagwa KO 10 Joe Morales	Telefutura	f	C	B-	B-
Morales might have had a chance here if he could punch a little						
7/12/05	Carlos Quintana KO 6 Francisco Campos	ESPN2	w	C+	D-	C+
If you go to the Playboy Mansion and watch a fight, you're a little too into boxing						
7/14/05	Roman Karmazin W 12 Kassim Ouma	HBO L	jm	A-	B+	C+
Upset! And whether or not Ouma was sick, Karmazin is a tough guy; let's hope for a sequel						
7/15/05	Hector Velazquez KO 5 Trinidad Mendoza	Telefutura	f	B-	C+	C
Give Velazquez credit: he knew he'd get Pacquaio if he won, and he won anyway						
7/15/05	B.J. Flores W 10 Frank Walker	ESPN2	h	C	C+	C+
Flores on the small side and not a big puncher, but he's got some skills; let's see what he can do						
7/15/05	Jason Litzau W 10 John Nolaso	ESPN2	jl	C	B+	B+
Litzau shows grit by climbing off deck to pull off hard earned win; good for him						
7/16/05	Fernando Montiel W 12 Evert Briceno	HBO PPV	jb	B+	C+	B-
Anyone else think this was a lot closer than 118-110 and 117-111 (twice)?						
7/16/05	Oscar Larios KO 10 Wayne McCullough	HBO PPV	jb	B+	A-	C+
The humane thing to do here was not stop it and let McCullough finish on his own terms						
7/16/05	**Jermain Tayor W 12 Bernard Hopkins**	**HBO PPV**	**m**	**A+**	**A**	C+
Bernard, Larry Holmes called; he said he's got a great line for you to use if you lose the rematch						
7/22/05	Agapito Sanchez KO 5 Art Simonyan	ESPN2	jf	C+	B+	C
Were you as shocked as we were when Sanchez headbutted Simonyan, cutting him over the eye?						
7/22/05	Orlin Norris D 10 Vassilliy Jirov	FOX SN	h	C-	B	C+
It's official: Jirov, once the world's best cruiserweight, is this generation's Al Cole						
7/22/05	Sam Soliman W 10 Fernando Zuniga	FOX SN	m	B+	B	B-
Soliman no technical genius, but with that pressure he applies he doesn't have to be						
7/22/05	Ahmed Kaddour W 8 Maxwell Taylor	Showtime	jm	C	A-	C+
Kaddour nothing great as a fighter, but as long as he keeps planting that girlfriend at ringside, we'll keep watching						
7/22/05	Rolando Reyes KO 8 Courtney Burton	Showtime	l	B-	A	B-
Okay, we get it: Burton peaked with the win over Manfredy						
7/22/05	Ricardo Castillo W DQ 8 Edel Ruiz	Telefutura	jf	C+	C+	C-
You can't fault Ruiz' strategy: If you can't beat 'em, hit 'em in the sack						
7/26/05	Anthony Peterson KO 6 Carlos Valdez	ESPN2	l	C	D	C
Sure Peterson looked good, but we'd be more impressed if Valdez had won a fight in the last eight years						
7/26/05	Ivan Hernandez W 12 Cesar Morales	ESPN2	jf	B-	B-	B-
Morales was in this, and if not for the point deductions the decision might have been interesting						
7/29/05	Rodney Toney W 10 James Lubwama	ESPN2	c	C+	B-	D-
Just when we thought the crusierweights were getting exciting, this borefest brought us back to reality						
8/2/05	Silverio Oriz W 10 Daniel Seda	ESPN2	l	B-	C-	B+
Upset! How did this guy lose six fights in a row?						
8/2/05	Marco Ramirez W 12 Tiger Smalls	ESPN2	f	C+	C-	C-
Don't you hate it when the guy with the cool nickname loses?						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino

BECKY O'NEILL, 1924-2005

She was a tiny woman with a larger-than-life personality, happily thrust into the boxing spotlight by a husband who preferred to keep a low profile. But sadly, by the time "K.O." Becky O'Neill died on July 1 after a lengthy illness, the diminutive manager of Hall of Fame bantamweight titleholder Jeff Chandler had been absent from the boxing scene for almost a decade.

"In recent years, as she got older and sicker, she became more and more eccentric," O'Neill's son, Phillip Gallelli, told Bernard Fernandez of the *Philadelphia Daily News*. "She didn't want anyone to know where she lived; she said she didn't want to be bothered."

Prior to becoming a recluse in her declining years, the 4'7" O'Neill led the life of an extrovert. The youngest daughter of a Russian refugee who settled in South Philadelphia, Becky became a vaudevillian. Billed as Tiny Baron, she toured the world with comedians Al Fisher and Lou Marks, and also appeared with Sophie Tucker and George Jessel.

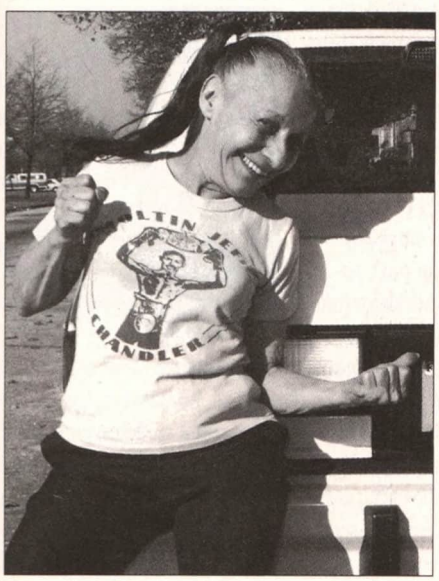
"We did it all—song, dance, and comedy," said O'Neill, who was also a national jitterbug champion in the 1940s.

After television killed vaudeville, she retired from show business, married Willie O'Neill, and raised a family. But her husband's lifelong affiliation with boxing would propel Becky back into public prominence in the late-1970s when Willie became Chandler's trainer-adviser. Willie, who had an encyclopedic knowledge of boxing, also had a criminal record. To avoid embarrassing questions and stop his past from becoming a major part of Chandler's story, Willie insisted that his wife be the manager of record.

It was a role that Becky reveled in. A media-friendly extrovert, she was the perfect counterbalance to the soft-spoken Chandler and her reserved husband. After winning the WBA 118-pound belt in 1980, Chandler fought frequently on television, and it wasn't long before the sight of K.O. Becky, her trademark pigtails flying as she bounced into the ring carrying the American flag, became a familiar sight to boxing fans.

During Chandler's heyday, Becky became something of a den mother to South Philly fighters. While her husband doled out sage advise, she would serve her special after-the-weigh-in beef broth to Chandler and other fighters, including WBC light heavyweight titlist Matthew Saad Muhammad.

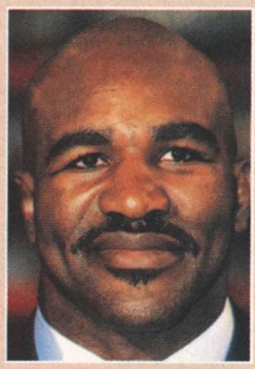
Even when Chandler abruptly retired following cataract surgery in 1984, Becky remained a public figure for a number of years, and could be spotted sitting at ringside, propped up on pillows so she could see over the apron, on fight cards televised from the Blue Horizon. But after Willie died of a stroke in 1994, ill health made it increasingly difficult for her to get around, and when Chandler was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2000, Becky was not among those in attendance in Canastota, New York, for the ceremony. But Chandler had not forgotten the kindly ex-con and his feisty little dynamo of a wife.



"K.O." Becky O'Neill in 1987

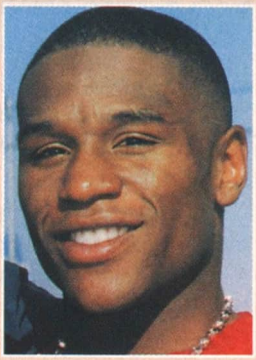
"Me, Willie, and Becky had a special thing going," said Chandler upon his induction. "Willie and Becky, they were like my mother and father. What we had went beyond boxing. They meant so much to me. They genuinely cared for me and wanted what was best for me."

—Nigel Collins



Holyfield: Aids orphan

Former heavyweight champion **Evander Holyfield** played the role of the Good Samaritan to an Indian orphan girl in July, when he turned up at the State Department in Washington, D.C., to plead for a visa for 11-year-old Shyamala Peddibotla's caretaker. Peddibotla was on a world tour organized by Global Peace Initiative, a group that works with street children, widows, and refugees, but the woman who has cared for Shyamala for the past five years did not receive a visa. The little girl, who suffers from juvenile diabetes, became seriously ill while in Washington, D.C., and was hospitalized. When the hospital explained it could not release Peddibotla without training her custodian how to monitor the child's blood sugar level and administer shots of insulin, Holyfield stood outside the State Department's doors until an assistant state secretary for consular affairs assured him that the State Department would apprise a U.S. official in India of the situation in the hope of a speedy solution … Former WBA middleweight titleholder **Jorge Castro** has been released from a Buenos Aires hospital, where he was recovering from a serious automobile accident. At one stage in June, the boxer was in an induced coma and on an artificial respirator. Many feared for his life, but happily, Castro has made a remarkable recovery and is even talking about boxing again … The New York State Athletic Commission lifted the suspension of heavyweight contender **James Toney** on July 30. Toney was suspended and fined $10,000 after testing positive for illegal steroids following his April 30 bout with **John Ruiz** at Madison Square Garden … Former WBO super middleweight titleholder **Chris Eubank**, 38, is in financial difficulty and has sold his £4-million mansion in East Sussex, England. Eubank, who retired in 1998 with a 45-5-2 (23) record, earned an estimated £10-million in the ring, but has taken a series of financial blows, including being sued by American Express for nearly £120,000 in unpaid credit card bills. It is also believed that Eubank owes the Inland Revenue (the British equivalent of the IRS) more than £1-million in unpaid taxes … Former featherweight champion and current junior lightweight contender **Manny Pacquiao** is also in trouble with the tax man. According to Jose Eric Furia of the Philippines Bureau of Internal Revenue, Pacquiao owes nine million Philippine peso, or approximately $160,500. Furia said that aside from ring earnings, Pacquiao failed to file and pay taxes on the many products he endorses, which include Talk 'n Text and Smart cellular phones, Pony and No Fear sportswear, Burlington socks, Red Bull, Family Rubbing Alcohol, and Surf laundry soap … In late-July, pound-for-pound king **Floyd Mayweather** was found not guilty of domestic violence when the mother of three of his children told the court that she had made up the story about Mayweather punching, kicking, and pulling her hair because she was angry at the boxer for leaving her … Meanwhile, a Las Vegas jewelry company has sued Mayweather, claiming the boxer owes the company $124,000 in unpaid bills for more than 20 pieces of jewelry purchased from the store since June 2004, including a diamond-encrusted belt buckle bearing his name … Welterweight **Golden Johnson**, 30, is back in training after a Bell County (Texas) judge ruled in the boxer's favor in a probation revocation hearing. Johnson's probation following a 1999 aggravated assault conviction had been revoked, but he was placed back on probation after paying restitution for the victim's medical expenses. Johnson, 23-7-2 (16), last fought on February 25, 2005, when he won a 12-round decision over **Freddy Hernandez** … Former bantamweight champion **Lionel Rose**, 57, has been charged in a car crash in which two passengers were seriously injured. The incident took place in Australia in October 2004, but Rose, who fought from 1964 until '76, didn't receive the summons until late-July … Two-time former IBF junior bantamweight titleholder **Ellyas Pical**, 45, was arrested in Jakarta, Indonesia, and charged with offering to sell illegal drugs to an undercover policeman at a discotheque. His arrest shocked boxing fans in Indonesia, where Pical was known as a clean and honest athlete who lived happily with his dentist wife and their children … Former European featherweight and Spanish lightweight champion **Fred Galiana** died on July 4 at the age of 74. Galiana, who packed 189 bouts into his 15-year pro career (1950-'65), was an extremely popular performer who attracted large crowds in Spain, thanks in part to his unorthodox style and showmanship. Galiana was rated in the top 10 throughout much of his career, but never fought for a world title despite an impressive 155-22-12 (90) record … In July, **Eddie Cook**, who won a middleweight gold medal for the United States in the 1960 Olympics, died of natural causes at a veterans hospital in Montgomery, Alabama. Cook, who lived in Columbia, Georgia, served two tours of duty with the U.S. Army in Vietnam, where he won a Silver Star, a Bronze Star, and two Purple Hearts. Cook was 76 at the time of his death.



Mayweather: Not guilty of assault

Galiana: Dead at 74

THE PUNCHLINES

"After what Reid did—or didn't do today—I am renaming this fight the 'Tampa Tea Party.' But instead of Boston Harbor, I'm dropping Reid in the ring."

—Jeff Lacy after British opponent Robin Reid hung up on media just as a conference call to hype their August 6 fight was beginning.

"I just want to get into the ring and smash someone."

—James Toney after his suspension for steroid use was lifted.

The RING®
"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

For weekly updated RING ratings, go to www.thering-online.com

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER** Junior Welterweight
2. **WINKY WRIGHT** Junior Middleweight
3. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA** Junior Lightweight
4. **ERIK MORALES** Junior Lightweight
5. **MANNY PACQUIAO** Junior Lightweight
6. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Featherweight
7. **RICKY HATTON** Junior Welterweight
8. **DIEGO CORRALES** Lightweight
9. **JERMAIN TAYLOR** Middleweight
10. **BERNARD HOPKINS** Middleweight

(For period ended August 4, 2005)

HEAVYWEIGHTS: No changes.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: No changes.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes, though the Jeff Lacy-Rob Reid fight, scheduled to take place a few days after this issue goes to press, could bring significant changes. If Lacy, rated number four entering the Reid fight, stops "The Grim Reaper," it could place him in firm position to challenge number-one super middleweight contender Joe Calzaghe for the world super middleweight title in December. A Reid victory will certainly increase his standing, but Lacy has far more to gain by winning than Reid (rated seventh).

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes, though Oscar De La Hoya, rated sixth this issue, will exit next issue due to inactivity. "The Golden Boy," who last fought on September 18, 2004, losing to Bernard Hopkins (KO by 9), has publicly stated that he has no fights scheduled for 2005.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes, though Daniel Santos (number three) came dangerously close to being removed from the ratings due to inactivity. Santos had a fight scheduled against Jose Antonio Rivera on September 3. WBA junior middleweight titlist Travis Simms (rated number six) could also be ousted from the ratings due to inactivity next issue. Simms, whose career has been on hold due to contractual squabbles with promoter Don King, has not fought since beating Bronco McKart in October '04 and has no fights scheduled.

WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: No changes. Juan Lazcano has not fought in over a year, but maintains his number three spot with a fight scheduled for early-August.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: No changes.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: There was major movement at the bottom of the ratings. Ivan Hernandez vacates the number-eight slot to fight at bantamweight. Mark Johnson slides down from nine to 10 due to inactivity. Eric Morel (10th last issue) leaves the ratings due to his indefinite suspension by the Nevada State Athletic Commission for pleading no contest to second-degree sexual assault of a minor. Replacing Hernandez at number eight is Hawk Makepula, who is on a six-fight winning streak since being stopped in the fourth round by Mzukisi Sikali in October 2003. Entering the ratings at nine is comebacking warhorse Gerry Penalosa, who is on a modest two-fight win streak since suffering a split-decision loss to then-WBC super flyweight titlist Masamori Tokuyama in December '02.

FLYWEIGHTS: Jorge Arce switched places with Omar Narvaez, moving up from six to five, based on his three-round blowout of Angel Priolo. Arce may increase his standing with another victory over Hussein Hussein, rated 10th, in their rematch October 8.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

STRAWWEIGHTS: No changes.

POUND-FOR-POUND: No changes.

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended August 3, 2005

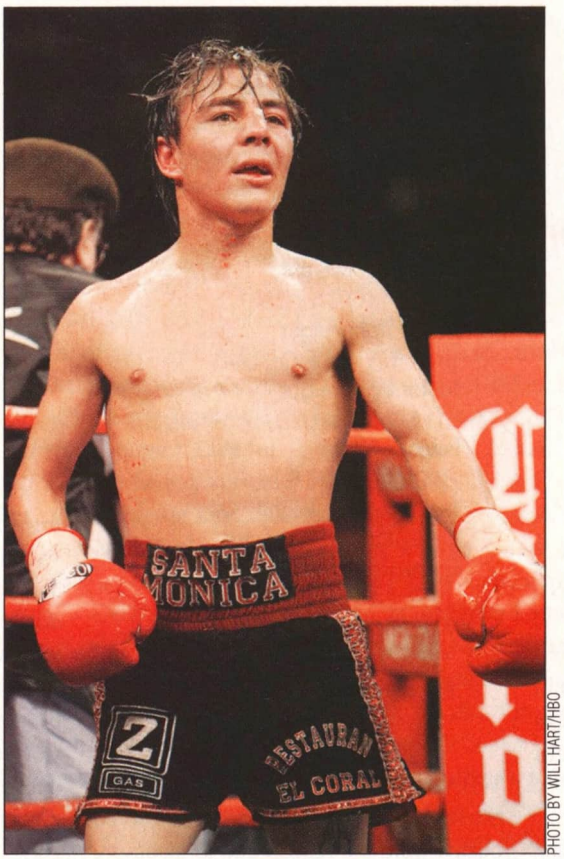


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Jorge Arce moves up one slot at flyweight after kayo of Angel Priolo

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING'S number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

Champ: VITALI KLITSCHKO
Ukraine 35-2 (34)

1. **CHRIS BYRD**
Flint, MI 38-2-1 (20)
2. **JOHN RUIZ**
Methuen, MA 41-5-1 (28)
3. **HASIM RAHMAN**
Baltimore, MD 40-5-1 (33)
4. **JAMES TONEY**
Ann Arbor, MI 68-4-2 (43)
5. **MONTE BARRETT**
Queens, NY 31-3 (17)
6. **LAMON BREWSTER**
Los Angeles, CA 32-2 (28)
7. **CALVIN BROCK**
Charlotte, NC 26-0 (21)
8. **SAMUEL PETER**
Las Vegas, NV 24-0 (21)
9. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 44-3 (40)
10. **JAMEEL McCLINE**
Clifton, NJ 31-5-3 (19)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: WINKY WRIGHT
St. Petersburg, FL 49-3 (25)

1. **ROMAN KARMAZIN**
Russia 34-1-1 (21)
2. **KASSIM OUMA**
W. Palm Beach, FL 21-2-1 (13)
3. **DANIEL SANTOS**
Puerto Rico 29-2-1 (20)
4. **IKE QUARTEY**
Ghana 36-2-1 (30)
5. **VERNO PHILLIPS**
Aurora, CO 38-10-1 (20)
6. **TRAVIS SIMMS**
Norwalk, CT 24-0 (18)
7. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 58-5 (40)
8. **RODNEY JONES**
Lafayette, LA 36-3 (22)
9. **KOFI JANTUAH**
Las Vegas, NV 28-2 (18)
10. **ALEJANDRO GARCIA**
Mexico 24-1 (24)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 44-2-1 (33)
2. **INJIN CHI**
South Korea 30-2-1 (18)
3. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
Houston, TX 23-0 (16)
4. **SCOTT HARRISON**
Scotland 24-2-2 (14)
5. **VICTOR POLO**
Colombia 34-5-3 (24)
6. **MANUEL MEDINA**
Mexico 63-14 (29)
7. **CHRIS JOHN**
Indonesia 35-0-1 (19)
8. **SPEND ABAZI**
Denmark 32-1 (10)
9. **NICKY COOK**
England 25-0 (15)
10. **HIROYUKI ENOKI**
Japan 22-0-1 (17)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **OSCAR LARIOS**
Mexico 56-3-1 (36)
2. **MAHYAR MONSHIPOUR**
France 28-2-2 (19)
3. **ISRAEL VAZQUEZ**
Mexico 38-3 (28)
4. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 23-0 (17)
5. **RICARDO CORDOBA**
Panama 25-0 (17)
6. **CELESTINO CABALLERO**
Panama 22-2 (16)
7. **YODDAMRONG SITHYODTHONG**
Thailand 42-2-1 (18)
8. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA**
Argentina 22-0 (13)
9. **GABULA VABAZA**
South Africa 21-0-1 (5)
10. **SHOJI KIMURA**
Japan 18-0-1 (7)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 34-3 (30)
2. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA**
Japan 18-2 (5)
3. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM**
Thailand 48-2-2 (34)
4. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN**
Thailand 63-8 (42)
5. **SILENCE MABUZA**
South Africa 18-0 (15)
6. **GENARO GARCIA**
Mexico 34-4 (20)
7. **CRUZ CARVAJAL**
Mexico 25-13-1 (21)
8. **RICARDO VARGAS**
Mexico 38-11-3 (12)
9. **JHONNY GONZALEZ**
Mexico 29-4 (25)
10. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO**
Ukraine 17-0 (6)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: JEAN-MARC MORMECK
France 31-2 (21)

1. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
Guyana 21-1 (17)
2. **JOHNNY NELSON**
England 44-12-2 (29)
3. **CARL THOMPSON**
England 33-6 (25)
4. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 17-0 (9)
5. **GUILLERMO JONES**
Panama 32-3-2 (25)
6. **O'NEIL BELL**
Atlanta, GA 24-1-1 (22)
7. **DALE BROWN**
Canada 33-4-1 (21)
8. **PIETRO AURINO**
Italy 34-2 (16)
9. **ALEXANDER GUROV**
Ukrain 38-4-1 (33)
10. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 32-1 (25)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: ANTONIO TARVER
Orlando, FL 23-3 (18)

1. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 42-10-2 (28)
2. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 22-0 (13)
3. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 49-3 (38)
4. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 38-2 (23)
5. **FABRICE TIOZZO**
France 47-2 (31)
6. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 37-3-1 (23)
7. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland 29-0 (20)
8. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 23-2 (17)
9. **THOMAS ULRICH**
Germany 28-1 (19)
10. **MONTELL GRIFFIN**
Chicago, IL 47-6 (30)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOE CALZAGHE**
Wales 39-0 (31)
2. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 36-0 (27)
3. **MARKUS BEYER**
Germany 32-2 (12)
4. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 19-0 (15)
5. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 23-3 (18)
6. **DANNY GREEN**
Australia 20-2 (19)
7. **ROBIN REID**
England 38-4-1 (27)
8. **MANNY SIACA**
Puerto Rico 18-5 (16)
9. **OTIS GRANT**
Canada 37-2-1 (17)
10. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 22-0 (16)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: JERMAIN TAYLOR
Little Rock, AR 24-0 (17)

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 46-3-1 (32)
2. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 49-3 (25)
3. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 24-1 (11)
4. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 16-0 (14)
5. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
England 40-3 (35)
6. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
Los Angeles, CA 37-4 (29)
7. **KINGSLEY IKEKE**
Canada 23-1 (13)
8. **SAM SOLIMAN**
Australia 31-7 (12)
9. **FERNANDO VARGAS**
Oxnard, CA 25-2 (22)
10. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 18-0 (12)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: ZAB JUDAH
Brooklyn, NY 34-2 (25)

1. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 32-4 (23)
2. **CORY SPINKS**
St. Louis, MO 34-3 (11)
3. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 40-4 (35)
4. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
Denmark 36-0 (27)
5. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 25-1 (11)
6. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 24-1 (22)
7. **JOSE ANTONIO RIVERA**
Worcester, MA 37-4-1(24)
8. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 35-3 (11)
9. **DAVID ESTRADA**
Chicago, IL 18-2 (9)
10. **SEBASTIAN LUJAN**
Argentina 22-2-1 (14)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 39-0 (29)

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
Grand Rapids, MI 34-0 (23)
2. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 24-0 (20)
3. **CARLOS MAUSSA**
Colombia 18-2 (16)
4. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
Australia 31-2 (25)
5. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 32-1-2 (19)
6. **ARTURO GATTI**
Jersey City, NJ 39-7 (30)
7. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 25-2-1 (17)
8. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
Washington, D.C. 30-4-1 (16)
9. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 40-8-1 (26)
10. **SOULEYMANE M'BAYE**
France 32-1 (17)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: DIEGO CORRALES
Las Vegas, NV 40-2 (33)

1. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
Mexico 52-7-1 (46)
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
Miami, FL 31-3-1 (19)
3. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 33-3-1 (25)
4. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 28-0 (14)
5. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 31-3 (23)
6. **ACELINO FREITAS**
Brazil 37-1 (32)
7. **ALMAZBEK RAIYMKULOV**
Kyrgyzstan 20-0-1 (12)
8. **RICKY QUILES**
Puerto Rico 38-6-3 (8)
9. **JULIEN LORCY**
France 56-4-2 (41)
10. **JOSE SANTA CRUZ**
Mexico 20-0 (11)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 60-4 (42)
2. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 48-2 (34)
3. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 39-3-2 (30)
4. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
Mexico 41-3 (28)
5. **VICENTE MOSQUERA**
Panama 21-1-1 (10)
6. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
Thailand 44-3-1 (25)
7. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 43-2-1 (31)
8. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ**
Bellflower, CA 41-5-1 (24)
9. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
South Africa 31-1 (16)
10. **ROBBIE PEDEN**
Australia 25-2 (14)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 29-1 (16)
2. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
North Korea 31-3-1 (8)
3. **LUIS PEREZ**
Nicaragua 23-1 (15)
4. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 31-1-1 (24)
5. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 27-1 (25)
6. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
Japan 28-4 (18)
7. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 22-1 (9)
8. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
South Africa 26-3 (17)
9. **GERRY PENALOSA**
JPhilippines 48-5-2 (33)
10. **MARK JOHNSON**
Washington, D.C. 44-4 (28)

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 56-2 (31)
2. **LORENZO PARRA**
Venezuela 25-0 (17)
3. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 23-0 (18)
4. **IRENE PACHECO**
Colombia 29-1 (22)
5. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 40-3-1 (30)
6. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 19-0-2 (13)
7. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
Nicaragua 34-2-2 (22)
8. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 19-0 (7)
9. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 23-2-1 (10)
10. **HUSSEIN HUSSEIN**
Australia 28-2 (21)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 19-1 (16)
2. **WILL GRIGSBY**
St. Paul, MN 18-2-1 (11)
3. **VICTOR BURGOS**
Mexico 37-14-3 (22)
4. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 20-3-1 (14)
5. **PICHITNOI SIRIWAT**
Thailand 34-2 (15)
6. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 22-2-2 (13)
7. **ERIC ORTIZ**
Mexico 24-4-1 (16)
8. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 17-1 (13)
9. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
Mexico 33-3-1 (20)
10. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
Colombia 35-4 (21)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **YUTAKA NIDA**
Japan 18-1-3 (8)
2. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 50-7-4 (22)
3. **IVAN CALDERON**
Puerto Rico 23-0 (5)
4. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 15-1 (7)
5. **ISAAC BUSTOS**
Mexico 24-7-3 (13)
6. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 13-1 (5)
7. **JUAN LANDAETA**
Venezuela 18-3-1 (15)
8. **OMAR SOTO**
Mexico 14-2-1 (10)
9. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 34-3-1 (29)
10. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 21-0 (16)

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

JERMAIN TO THE PLOT

The townspeople of Little Rock, Arkansas, threw a victory parade for local-boy-made-good Jermain Taylor on July 22, and it's probably safe to say that the city hadn't been that giddy since heavyweight "Slick Willy" Clinton bobbed and weaved his way safely through his impeachment trial back in the '90s. It's a wonder, though, why Little Rock waited so long to celebrate. It could have lined up the marching bands, shredded the confetti, and handed Taylor the key to the city a couple of months earlier.

Taylor was, after all, declared the winner over Bernard Hopkins long before their clash for the undisputed middleweight title went through the unnecessary inconvenience of actually taking place at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. If you listened to many of the pom-pom-wavers with press credentials around their necks in the weeks leading up to the showdown, you'd have thought it was Taylor who had been a champion for a decade and Hopkins who was making a huge leap in class and being truly tested for the first time.

Call it an epidemic of wishful thinking. Taylor is a likable kid who's young, strong, fast, and full of energy. In the minds of many, it would be fun to watch him mature with a belt around his waist. Conversely, plenty of people—from the big shots running HBO PPV to the voices on talkradio (the few who know the difference between a ring stool and a Ring Ding)—had grown tired of Hopkins and his modus operandi. The future Hall of Famer has always been more concerned with making his-

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Not all of Hopkins' antics have been conducive to winning friends

tory than making friends, and his antics through the latter stage of his career have done more chafing than a starched jockstrap on a marathon runner.

Some of "The Executioner's" irritating behavior has been benign (ignoring popular opinion and choosing to fight whom he wanted when he wanted), some tasteless (running his thumb across his throat in a slashing motion to send a message to his rival), and some ugly (throwing the Puerto Rican flag to the floor to incite Felix Trinidad's supporters). At the weigh-in for the Taylor bout, Hopkins reportedly told his former adviser, Lou DiBella, now Taylor's promoter, that he was going to drive him to suicide.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Taylor takes one in the mouth from the old man

While it's understandable that a lot of folks would decide they'd had enough of Hopkins' mouth, it's surprising that so many of them would conclude they'd also had enough of his reign. Hey, it's not as if there are a lot of Executioners around. Today, an "established" champ is a guy who's survived at the top for two years. Even the old reliables, soldiers who could be counted on to always entertain for as long as their fights lasted, have been breaking down one after another like overheated clunkers in bumper-to-bumper traffic. In their most recent outings, Mike Tyson, Kostya Tszyu, and Arturo Gatti all surrendered while *sitting on their stools*. Hopkins wouldn't quit on his stool if he were taking a beating from one of the alien tripods in *War Of The Worlds*.

When the split decision was announced in Taylor's favor, the cynic in me couldn't help but wonder if this was yet another case of the judges, specifically Paul Smith and Duane Ford, favoring the fighter the establishment wanted to win, rather than the fighter who actually deserved the victory. (My scorecard favored Hopkins, 115-113.) How Ford could have given the 12th round to Taylor is an unsolved mystery that ranks right up there with D.B. Cooper and the Bermuda Triangle.

Taylor lost the last four rounds on my card, and you don't dethrone a record-setting, all-time great champion if you fail to charge out there and take it from him at crunch time. (Or if you connect with just 86 punches, according to CompuBox, in 36 minutes.) Nonetheless, as soon as the verdict was announced, HBO's Jim Lampley exclaimed, "You've got a brand new star in boxing!" Sorry to ruin the fun, Lamps, but we most certainly do not. Not based on all the missed punches, clutching, grabbing, and failing to come up big down the stretch that we got from Taylor on this night. Did you watch the way Ricky Hatton went after Tszyu? *That's* how you try to take away a crown.

(An aside here: Why do morons who know nothing at all about boxing repeatedly get to cover it? Shortly after Taylor had gotten the decision over a guy who'd made a division-record 20 successful title defenses, hadn't lost in 12 years, and was considered the best fighter, pound-for-pound, in the world, ESPNews anchor Cindy Brunson asked reporter Shelley Smith if this was the biggest win of Taylor's career. Lord, give me strength.)

Taylor may still go on to have a sensational career. But your columnist is hard-pressed to remember any other world champion who won his first title on a disputed decision after having lost the final four rounds, then went on to achieve greatness. As for Hopkins, this wasn't one of his finest hours either. (He connected with only 96 shots.) The Executioner seemed more interested in executing an energy-saving game plan than executing another victim. He was overly patient/confident, thinking that either he was winning rounds by making Taylor miss so much, or was going to be able to conclude matters soon after he started connecting with his right hand. Wrong on both counts.

Though Hopkins is 40, the needle on his gas gauge hasn't settled on "E" yet. If he keeps the promise he made to his mother and retires before he celebrates his next birthday in January, he probably has two bouts at the most remaining. What the "loss" to Taylor has done, though, is make the Philadelphian's career twilight more intriguing than it figured to be. Before the Taylor bout, Hopkins had been proposing battles with Antonio Tarver and Roy Jones. Instead, Hopkins will now likely square off with Taylor in December, perhaps fighting a tune-up first.

Maybe we should be thanking judges Ford and Smith instead of criticizing them, for they've given us a storyline. Had they simply marked their cards for Hopkins, as they should have, there's no way the champion would have granted a rematch to Taylor, a kid who gave him too many Maalox moments in the first half of the bout. Because of the controversy, however, we get a sequel and the questions that come along with it. Will another grueling training camp finally sap what's left of the old man's energy? Will this be yet another case of, as venerable trainer Gil Clancy likes to note, a fighter who captures a belt becoming instantly better? Will Taylor finish stronger the next time? Or has Hopkins, who failed to intimidate his young foe by getting in his face at the weigh-in, given Taylor something to think about with that late-rounds rally?

Next time, it might be smart for Hopkins to bring his own cheerleaders with him. Perhaps the Philadelphia Eagles can lend him theirs for the occasion. Cheerleaders should, after all, wear sweaters and cute skirts, not HBO blazers. ■

DIGGING DEEP

By Ivan Goldman

HOW TO RUN BOXING: NEW RULES

After a yearlong lockout that gave players and owners time for serious reflection, the NHL returns this season with a new financial structure as well as rules changes designed to make the sport more exciting. Wouldn't it be nice if boxing reorganized itself too? But the squabbles in team sports are nothing compared to those in professional prizefighting, which is tied with Somalia in the anarchy ratings.

That's why I've taken it upon myself to disassemble the fight game and put it back together so it works better for everybody. I've floated some of these ideas in past columns, but here they are all in one place. I know what you're thinking—*perhaps I'm overstepping my bounds*. But it's okay, I fixed everything with the Supreme Court. George Bush showed me the way. So in the spirit of HBO's Bill Maher, here are Goldman's New Rules:

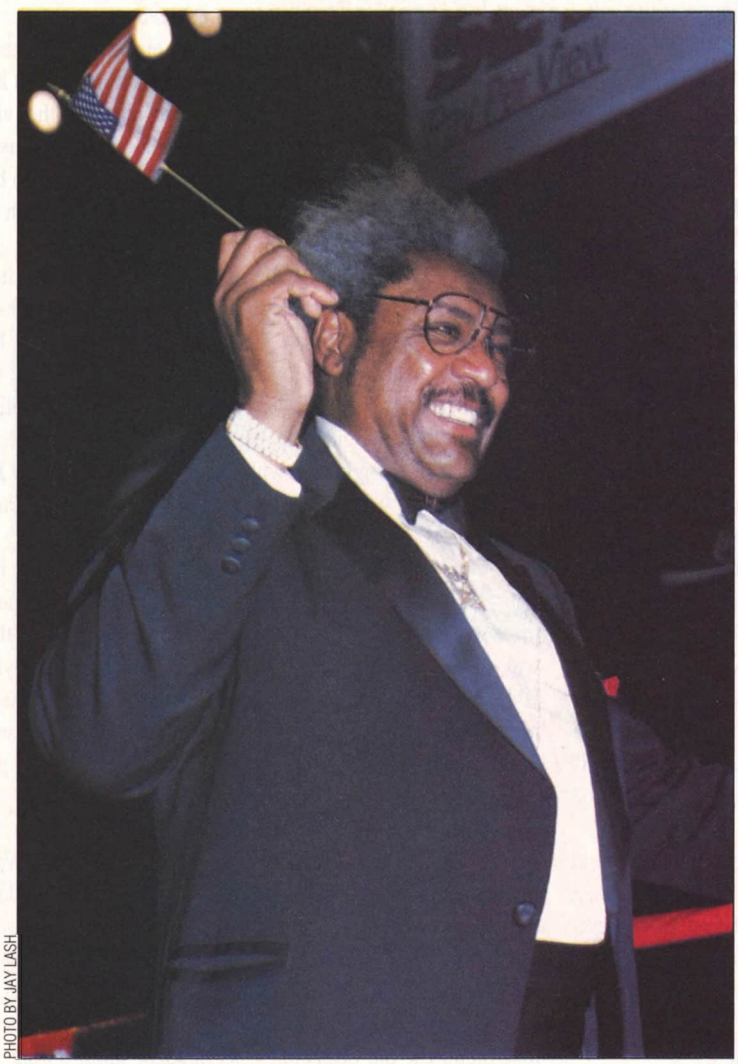


PHOTO BY JAY LASH

Forget the flag, Don. We get the idea already

•Referees may stop wearing bowties. Talk about a dumb tradition. The poor guys sweat up a storm under all those TV lights. At the end of 10 rounds, they look like they've been water skiing. Even Lawrence of Arabia, a proper British Army officer, took off his tie when he was crossing the desert. In the same spirit of making everyone more comfortable, Laila Ali can dispense with her top.

•Naturally, we will close down the alphabet gangs, bulldoze their headquarters, and freeze all their Swiss and Cayman Islands bank accounts. But to make sure their families and mistresses don't starve, we'll give the various alphabet functionaries seed money to enter related occupations of their own choosing. No doubt some will prosper operating Ponzi schemes, peddling phony securities, or running for Congress.

•HBO and Showtime can no longer sign fighters to multifight contracts. All that does is segregate the two rosters, preventing cross-cable fights. And at the annual softball game between the two networks' fight crews, no more poison-tipped spikes.

•This is merely a request. Will somebody please tell Don King he can stop waving those little American flags? Enough already. We get the point, Don. Only in America. Now do us all a

favor. Proceed to Bolivia and wait for further instructions.

•Bernard Hopkins is henceforth prohibited from referring to himself in the third person, as when he tells everybody, "Bernard Hopkins knows what he's doing." If Hopkins really knew what he was doing, he'd stop sounding like a jerk. And as long as we're on the subject of inflated egos, Hopkins' new pal and business partner Oscar De La Hoya must forget about putting a statue of himself in the lobby of his office building in downtown L.A. Who does he think he is? Abe Lincoln?

•Once and for all, Hopkins submits to testing for extraterrestrial tissues. You mean to tell me a 40-year-old Earthling can have more left after 12 rounds than 26-year-old Jermain Taylor? Where is this guy really from? And don't tell me Philadelphia.

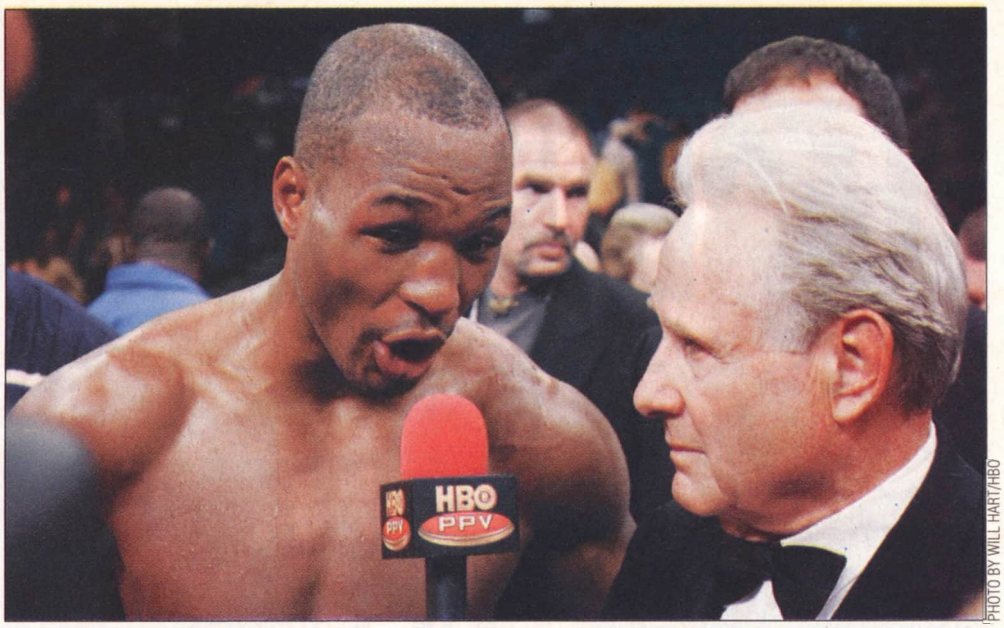


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

There's bad chemistry between Hopkins and Merchant

•Postfight winners will be limited to a maximum of three individuals they can say hello to back home.

•No more boxing trunks that look like Roman Centurions' skirts. Vendors caught selling trunks that won't stay up shall do six months in a Chinese sweatshop.

•Lawmakers get the same health and pension benefits the fighters do. That should fix it.

•When purses exceed $1-million, five cents of every dollar above that figure will be deposited into a fund and distributed as bonuses to undercard and club card fighters. That will bring De La Hoya's $20-million purses down to about $19-million and put food on the table for a lot of hard-working athletes who take more chances inside the ropes than certain middleweight champions I could name.

•No more foul protectors that climb halfway up the fighter's chest. Fighters must try on their gear for inspectors the day before the fight. Any protectors that rise above the navel or appear poised to do so are disallowed. Commissions will keep their own stockpiles of emergency protectors, just as they keep stockpiles of emergency gloves.

•Duct tape over the laces. Enough of that adhesive tape that breaks down from moisture. California already does this, and it works better. No need to reinvent the wheel.

•Standardized 20-foot rings.

•Promoters cannot choose officials. If they so much as suggest a name, they will be fined and/or suspended.

•Men above the age of 25 who wear baseball caps backwards shall be put to death.

•TV analysts who bore us repeatedly with the admonition that some fighter getting his butt kicked must "let his hands go" shall be escorted off the premises. Someone outside the building will then explain to them that in virtually every one of these cases the fighter stopped throwing shots because he's been tattooed all night with counterpunches by a superior fighter.

•Larry Merchant will be barred from interviewing Hopkins. Let someone else handle him, Larry. The chemistry there just isn't right. Otherwise you're doing fine. Incidentally, no more T-shirts under a suit or sport jacket. That goes for everybody. You too, ShoBox Steve and Nick. I bet you didn't wear that crap to your auditions.

•All those people who crowd into the ring after a big fight for no particular reason shall be dragged out, wrestled to the ground, and pepper-sprayed.

•Executives of the hotels and promotional companies that set out buffets for the media shall be obliged to eat a plateful themselves. That should fix it.

•Sports sections that ignore boxing will henceforth be labeled in their table of contents as Half-assed, Incomplete Sports Sections.

•Beer and peanut vendors shall from time to time switch jobs with boxing judges to keep them in line and provide us with realistic scores for a change.

•Nominees for boxing commissions—that includes you, Bruce Jenner—must pass a standardized multiple-choice test that knowledgeable fans could sail through easily.

•Phony casino commissions that label themselves Native-American boxing commissions shall cease to exist and their operations will be folded into state commissions comprised of people who passed the test.

•Double-crossing, steroid-enhanced, has-been-movie-star governors who are caught taking money on the side from muscle magazines shall be barred from boxing. Consequently, they can no longer appoint commissioners. Said governors may attend fights only if they buy their own ticket and stop applying so much make-up that it provokes violent sneezing among innocent bystanders for 15 yards in every direction.

SECONDS OUT: I had the honor of presenting THE RING lightweight championship belt to Diego "Chico" Corrales at a laidback media event publicizing his upcoming sequel with Jose Luis Castillo. Castillo stole the show when he presented Corrales with a dozen new mouthpieces, a prank that made Corrales laugh as hard as anybody. ■

BEING THERE

JABB BOXING GYM

IF YOU GO

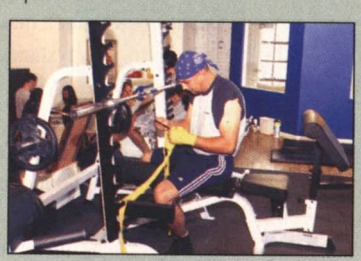
Location: 410 N. Oakley, 2nd Floor, Chicago, IL 60612; phone: 312-733-5222; fax: 312-226-5801

Directions: From the northwest: Take I-90 East. Take the Fullerton Avenue/2400 N. exit (Exit 47A). Keep right at the fork to go on W. Fullerton Avenue. Turn left onto N. Western Avenue and go 2.3 miles south. Turn left onto W. Grand Avenue, and then turn right onto N. Oakley Boulevard/N. Oakley Avenue.

Hours of Operation: Monday through Friday: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Sundays by appointment only.

Who to look out for: Heavyweight contender Fres Oquendo, former NBA star cum cruiserweight boxer Kendall Gill, Freddy Cuevas, Luciano Perez, and David Diaz.

Advice to greenhorns: No excuses, please! The gym is conveniently located just west of Downtown and the Loop and south of Bucktown/Wicker Park. All skill and fitness levels are welcome. Work one-on-one, train in one of several groups, or workout on your own. Whether you are a professional fighter, white-collar boxer, someone in search of a different workout, or simply a reforming couch potato, this gym has something to offer you. Clients and staff are friendly and helpful.



Carlos Castaneda wraps his hands

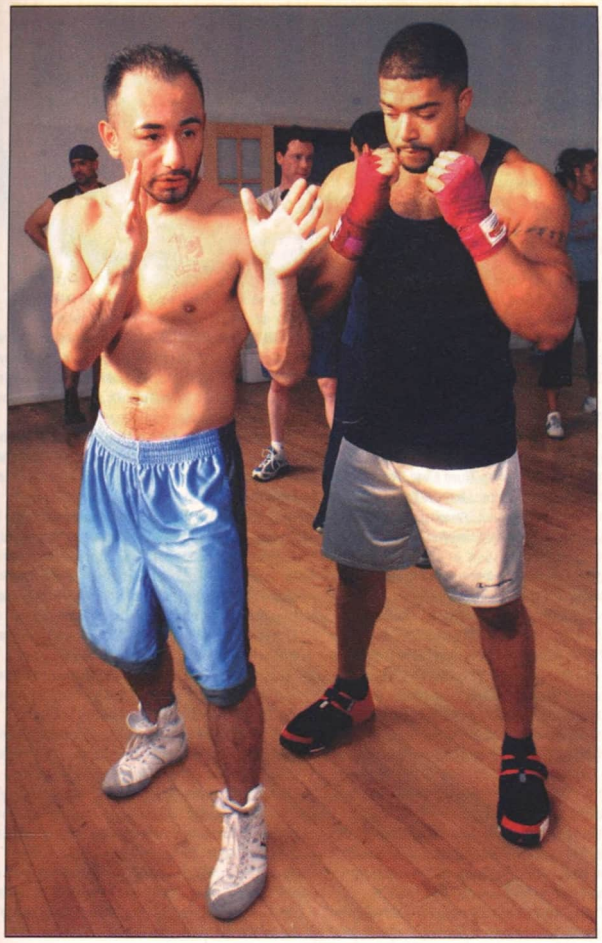
All eyes are on the ring during sparring session at the Jabb Gym

By Juan C. Ayllon

PHOTOS BY JOHN BOOZ

JABB Boxing Gym was a dream come true for neighborhood pals Dominic Pesoli and Michael Garcia. Pesoli, a former CYO light heavyweight amateur champion and currently president of 8 Count Productions, has been around boxing since age 13. Garcia, who was inspired by a neighborhood fighter managed by Dominic's uncle, won the Chicago Golden Gloves four times, lost a decision to Oscar De La Hoya at the 1989 Nationals, and compiled a 26-0 (18) record as a professional fighter before recurring hand and elbow problems forced him to retire. As boxing was their passion, Pesoli

Jabb crew, from left to right: Al Ortiz, Mike Garcia, Tina Park, Dominic Pesoli, Lalo Beas, Freddie Cuevas, and Augustine Barragan



Trainer Freddie Cuevas (left) gives David Otunga some pointers

and Garcia revisited a 10-year dream of building a gym together and, on December 15, 2003, JABB opened its doors.

Sporting a high, arched ceiling with wooden trusses overhead, exposed brick along its southern wall, and mottled hardwood floors throughout, the facility betrays its industrial roots. Indeed, with 6,000 square feet and plenty of window surface at either end of the main space, the gym has the feel of a well-lit loft.

On the east end, weights and conditioning equipment sit atop a raised platform. Next to the weights is an 18'x 18' boxing ring; a second ring is scheduled for installation. At the room's center, three flags, those of Mexico, the U.S., and Puerto Rico, hang proudly on the walls. Six heavybags, an uppercut bag, three speedbags, and a climbing rope adorn the center and spacious western portion of the gym. A media room for boxers to view tapes of upcoming opponents is currently being finished. Framed vintage boxing posters adorn the walls.

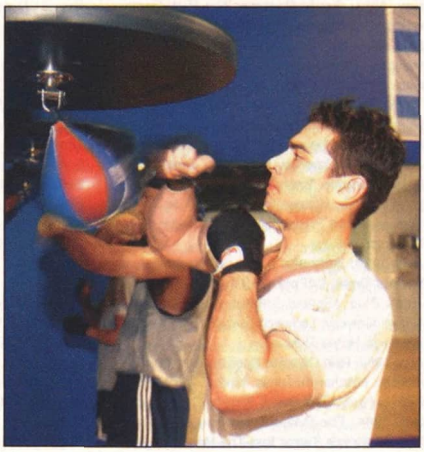
Electronic chirps mark off rounds and rest periods as professional and amateur fighters, white-collar boxers, and lay people of varying fitness levels alike train seriously.

Training opportunities include "Hard Core Boxing Training Camp," which teaches the basics of a fighter's workout, such as learning to throw elementary combinations, how to hit the heavybag, focus mitts, speedbag, and jump rope, as well as strength and conditioning exercises. There also the ever-popular "S & M" or "Stick and Move," a cardio boxing class where participants throw combinations in the air, jump rope, and do strength and conditioning exercises. In addition, there are private lessons, a kids training program on Saturday mornings, and working out independently for a basic fee. Pesoli and Garcia teach the boxing camps and, along with other trainers, give private lessons. JABB has also begun hosting quarterly white-collar boxing events.

Not only has it been a dream-come-true for Pesoli and Garcia, the timing has fortunately coincided with a recent resurgence of Chicago boxing.

"The response we've gotten in the 18 months that we've been in business has been extraordinary," said Pesoli. "The big plans that we have for the gym is to keep providing a facility for people to learn, develop, and get better. I think people are seeing there's interest in Chicago." ■

The entrance to Chicago's newest boxing gym



Web site designer and white-collar boxer Tony Isabelli works the speed bag

There's plenty of room to maneuver at the Jabb Gym

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May 1986: Hagler vs. Mugabi: Marvelous Marvin Tames The Beast. Plus: Marvin Johnson, McGuigan-Cabrera, Bramble-Crawley, Tyson-Ferguson, 10 worst decisions.

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Sept. 1986: Gerry Cooney vs. Mike Tyson: Who Would Win? Plus: Cruz-McGuigan, Hearns-Medal, Tyson-Gross, Sims-Duran.

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Nov. 1987: Tyson Wins Heavyweight Triple Crown. Plus: McCallum-Curry, Carlos Monzon interview, triple champions, Orlin & Terry Norris, Ramirez-Alli, Fenech-Richardson, Matthew Hilton.

Dec. 1987: Spinks & Lewis: Boxing's Beastie Boys. Plus: Starling-Breland, Ramzi Hassan, Honeyghan-Hatcher, Holyfield-Ocasio.

Jan. 1988: Darrin Van Horn—Million Dollar Baby? Plus: Evander Holyfield, Hill-Stewart, Juan Coggi, great hookers, AIDS.

Feb. 1988: Gold Outshines Glitter: Tate Tops Olajide. Plus: Tyson-Biggs, Kalambay-Barkley, Hearns-Roldan, fights we'd like to see.

March 1988: Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns: "Now I Own History." Plus: Lockridge & Mayweather, Tony Burton, Julio Cesar Chavez, blood.

April 1988: Evander Holyfield: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Special year-end awards, Holyfield-Qawi II, Foreman-Sekorski, Hill-Angulo.

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Oct. 1988: Mike Tyson: What Price Glory? Plus: Tyson-Spinks, Hearns-Barkley, Davey Moore.

Nov. 1988: Donny Lalonde: "Sugar Ray is Out Of His Mind!" Plus: Hall of Fame selections (Carlos Ortiz, Joe Brown, Billy Graham, Cus D'Amato, Jimmy Jacobs), Nunn-Tate, Molinares-Starling, Honeyghan-Chung, '88 Olympians.

Jan. 1989: Meldrick Taylor: Philly Phenom. Plus: Marvin Hagler, Alex Wallau, Taylor-McGirt, Olympic results.

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Sept. 1990: Marvin Hagler—Can He Resist The Irresistible Temptation? Plus: Thomas Hearns, Sanchez-Saddler, Paul Banke, puncher vs. chin, Beau Jack, Robinson-LaMotta (color).

Nov. 1990: Tyson vs. Foreman. Can Iron Mike Stop The Blast From The Past? Plus: Bruce Seldon, best chins, Sullivan-Kilrain (color), Azumah Nelson, LaStarza.

Dec. 1990: Exclusive Annual Report: The State Of The Game. Plus: Douglas-Holyfield preview, Julio Cesar Chavez, Joe Grim, Whitaker-Nazario, Rosi-Van Horn, Benny Leonard, Douglas-Tyson (color).

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Aug. 1991: Foreman Gives Holyfield A Fight ... And The World A Thrill (color). Plus: Making weight, Harry Greb, Kevin Kelley, Louis-Conn I, Simon Brown-Blocker, Chavez-Duplessis, Sugar Ray Robinson.

Oct. 1991: A Hit Again—How Far Can Thomas Hearns Go? Plus: Battling Levinsky, Oba Carr, Dave McAuley, Muhammad Ali, Lou Ambers, Luther McCarty, ethnic matchups, computer light heavy tournament, Cerdan-Hagler, Rocky Marciano (color).

July 1992: Does Larry Holmes Deserve A Title Shot? Plus: Nelson-Fenech II, Tracy Patterson, Kelley-Dorsey, fat fighters, Buchanan-Camacho, Holmes-Ali (color).

Aug. 1992: Holyfield-Holmes Prefight. Holmes: "I See Me Takin' Holyfield Outta There." Plus: Iran Barkley, Herbie Hide, George Foreman, Tex Cobb, Carnival of Champions, Harry Greb, Haugen-Mancini, Oscar De La Hoya, Gene Tunney (color).

Sept. 1992: Chavez: Unbeaten At 80-0, But What If He Had To Face These Guys? Plus: Bobby Czyz, Genaro Hernandez, Norris-Taylor, Tommy Gibbons, Sugar Ray Leonard's career, Sugar Ray Robinson (color).

Nov. 1992: Is Riddick Bowe The Next Heavyweight Champion? Plus: Morrison-Hipp, Canizales-Chandler, Chavez-Camacho preview, Australia Best of Nation, Tyson speaks from prison, Corbett-Sullivan (color), Tracy Patterson, Pat Barrett, Knockout Brown.

Feb. 1993: America's Tribute To The Brown Bomber: Joe Louis. Plus: Virgil Hill, Junior Jones, Roger Mayweather, Chicago boxing, Orlando Zulueta, Jose Napoles (color).

April 1993: Riddick Bowe—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: "Grand Slam" fight card, Toney-Barkley preview, Morris East, Joe Louis-John Henry Lewis, All-Time Top 10: Argentina, Fighters of the Year (color).

May 1993: Oscar De La Hoya's Sprint To The Title: Is He Good Enough *Now?* Plus: Carbajal-Gonzalez preview, Lennox Lewis, THE RING Poll, Freddie Pendleton.

Aug. 1994: Bowe's Back! Determined To Do It Again. Plus: Eric Griffin, Pernell Whitaker, Ray Mercer, Roger Donoghue, State of the Game (midterm report), All-Time Top 10: The Philippines.

Dec. 1994: Fighting-Mad! James Toney Just Wants To Beat People Up. Plus: Duran & Robinson, Don King, Mike McCallum, injuries (part II), Tom Molineaux.

May 1995: The State Of The Game. Plus: Olzubek & Arbachakov, Gonzalez-Kelley, Pazienza-Duran II, All-Time Top 10: France.

Oct. 1995 (92-Page Special): Mismatch? Don't Tell Peter McNeeley! Plus: Fights we'd like to see, Jo-el Scott, Bronco McKart, when stop fights?

Dec. 1995: Mike Tyson (vs. Peter McNeeley): The Beast Is Yet To Come. Plus: Morrison-Lewis preview, Naseem Hamed, Chiquita Gonzalez, Gaspar Ortega, 10 best chins.

Jan. 1996: King Bruno! A Hero Always ... A Winner At Last. Plus: Julio Cesar Chavez, Oscar De La Hoya, Chris Eubank, Eddie Perkins, who's hot/who's not.

Feb. 1996: Bowe's The Man (For Now), But Is He Man Enough For Tyson? Plus: Lennox Lewis, Hamed-Barrera, Paul Banke, Vince Phillips, boxing on Madison Ave., What If ... Leonard-Pryor.

Sept. 1996: Lennox Lewis: Tough Enough For Tyson? Plus: Lewis-Mercer, Olympic team, Pernell Whitaker, Mark Johnson, Rocky, Scrapiron Johnson, heavyweight hopefuls.

Nov. 1996: Pole-Axed! Low Blows, Sinking Bowe, Ugly Show. Plus: Bowe-Golota I, Blinky Palermo, exciting fighters, Winky Wright, Joe Brown.

June 1997 (Special Collector's Issue): Holyfield-Tyson II: What It Means For Now ... And Forever. Plus: Holyfield-Tyson fight poster, Naseem Hamed, computer unification, Sayers-Heenan, state of the game.

Oct. 1997: Bang! Naseem Hamed Takes Aim At America. Plus: Riddick Bowe, Phillips-Tszyu, Saman Sorjaturong, Bobby Dykes.

Nov. 1997: Is Mike Tyson Finished? Plus: Ike Ibeabuchi, De La Hoya-Camacho preview, Frankie Conley, Hall of Fame, gloves,

Jan. 1998: Give This Man His Due! If You Can't Respect Oscar ... You Can't Respect Anyone! Plus: Sanchez-Mayweather, Morales-Zaragoza, Lucia Rijker, Marvin Johnson, characters.

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Spring 2005—Svelter Welter: Moving To 147 Will Tip The Scale In Oscar's Favor. Also: Vitali Klitschko, Glen Johnson, Andre Ward, Johnny Persol.

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NEW FACES

NICK CASAL

Junior Welterweight

By Tim Graham

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Nick Casal was eight years old when he presented his father with a drawing of a man in a boxing ring, hands raised victoriously above his head. Dad asked who the fighter was. Perhaps it was Nick's hero, Mike Tyson?

Nope. It was Nick himself, winning an Olympic gold medal in Greece.

That was about three years before Athens was selected to host the Summer Games in 2004, when Casal would reach the prime Olympic age of 18. Now how in the world could a little tyke from Niagara Falls, New York, project his undeveloped amateur career to such heights?

The child's sketch turned into a vision quest, and as the pieces started to fall into place, the scene appeared eerily prophetic. Casal became a ferocious competitor in major amateur tournaments. His style was more brawling pro than amateur tactician, choosing to emulate his ring idol, Mike Tyson.

Casal was named one of three outstanding boxers by winning the 2002 National Junior Olympics title at 156 pounds. But he made his mark in the 152-pound division, where he won the New York State Golden Gloves in 2001, '02, and '03. He won the Fran Jones Under-19 National Championships in 2003, a feat that landed him in *Sports Illustrated*. Later that same year, he went on to claim the 70-kilogram title at the Sweden Cup in Stockholm.

Casal's boyhood dream was developing into reality. He was known around New York as "Hands Of Gold" for his prowess on the amateur circuit and it was easy to envision Olympic gold around his neck.

But in January '04, the lofty hopes that drawing represented essentially were crumpled up and tossed into the garbage can. Casal hurt his shoulder during his quarterfinal match with Henri White. Casal's father and trainer, Ray Casal, popped the injury back into place in the corner, and Nick went on to win a deci-

(Continued on page 87)

PRO RECORD

2004		
June 5	Anthony Nelson, Joplin, MO	KO 3
July 20	Timothy Crane, Joplin	KO 1
July 30	Lance Leggett, Louisville, KY	KO 1
Oct. 2	Davey McBride, Las Vegas, NV	KO 2
Nov. 20	Giovana Rubio, Las Vegas	KO 1
Dec. 17	Jesse Curry, Santa Ynez, CA	KO 1
2005		
Feb. 25	Mike Walker, Miami, OK	KO 1
April 22	Sean Holley, Santa Ynez	KO 3
May 7	Rodney Freeman, Las Vegas	KO 1
May 20	Steve Verdin, Miami, OK	KO 2
June 16	Martinus Clay, Glen Burnie, MD	KO 1

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
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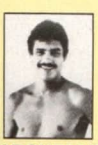

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★ Azumah Nelson
★ Buddy McGirt
★ Michael Carbajal
★ Barry McGuigan
★ "Irish" Micky Ward
★ Carlos Palomino
★ Sir Henry Cooper
★ Dwight Qawi
★ Tommy Morrison
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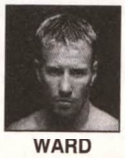

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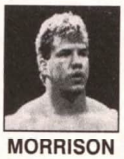

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JERMAIN TAYLOR IS THE NEW WORLD CHAMPION

But Is He The Best Middleweight In The World?

By Joe Santoliquito
PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

Jermain Taylor's head tilted down slightly, blood leaking from a divot-like fissure in his scalp, as he headed back to his corner at the end of the 12th round. His body language suggested he was about to receive bad news. Taylor had just completed the fight of his life, giving world middleweight champion Bernard Hopkins his stiffest test in 12 years. Even so, with the horrid memory of the final four rounds in the forefront of his mind, Taylor looked sullen, his glare affixed some place other than where he was.

So when, following the perfunctory pause to build the drama, the ring announcer said ... "and *new* middleweight champion of the world, Jermain Taylor!" relief overtook anxiety, quickly followed by exultation.

As "Bad Intentions" was hoisted up by his handlers, HBO's Jim Lampley proclaimed that there was a "brand new star in boxing, and his name is Jermain Taylor." In many ways, it was difficult to disagree with Lampley. After all, Taylor had answered every question posed to him during the Hopkins fight. Well, *almost* every question. True, he'd proved he could handle adversity, and he showed he belongs among boxing's elite by going 12 hard rounds against a future Hall of Famer. But the one glaring uncertainty in becoming the middleweight champion of the world via a controversial split-decision still lingered: Is Taylor *really* the best middleweight in the world?

Many experts watching at ringside on the evening of July 16 certainly questioned the decision, as did many of the 350,000 that viewed the fight on pay-per-view. The response from the live audience of 11,992 at the MGM Grand Garden Arena, which included approximately 4,000 Taylor fans from Arkansas, was decidedly mixed.

Taylor looks much happier with the belts wrapped around him after the split decision in his favor was announced (opposite page) than he did walking back to his corner at the end of the 12th round of his middleweight championship fight with Bernard Hopkins (right). Taylor is the new undisputed middleweight champion, but he needs a more definitive win in the rematch to convince everybody of his superiority.

TEAM
TAYLOR
MGM GRAND GARDEN
RESERVED SEAT
WORLD
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CONTINENTAL AMERICAS

The undefeated challenger went after Hopkins during the early rounds and threw more punches than the defending champion. But even though Hopkins threw very few punches in return, his defensive abilities allowed him to escape without absorbing many big punches.

That's the dilemma facing Taylor. While he did gain entrance into today's exclusive pound-for-pound pantheon, does the mantle of best middleweight in the world still belong to Hopkins? Being the champion is one thing; being considered the best is something different.

What is undeniable is that for the first eight rounds Taylor fulfilled his considerable promise as Hopkins' successor. He attacked Hopkins, forcing the action and backing up the 40-year-old veteran. It didn't matter that Hopkins had not lost a fight since 1993, or that he held a middleweight record of 20 straight title defenses. It didn't matter that entering the bout, Hopkins previously held the longest reign of any current champion, 10 years 82 days.

Hopkins' prefight threats seemed to bounce off Taylor's steely resolve. Maybe those intimidation ploys and bully tactics worked against Carl Daniels, Morrade Hakkar, William Joppy, Robert Allen, and Howard Eastman. Not Taylor.

Over the first eight rounds, Taylor kept coming forward, while Hopkins did little to dissuade him. Hopkins didn't suddenly age overnight, but his game plan did. In his previous two fights, "The Executioner" had blatantly paced himself by doing as little as possible during the first half. Against Taylor, the plan backfired. Hopkins' deliberate tempo opened the door for Taylor to build an early lead, according to judges Duane Ford and Paul Smith, then hang on as Hopkins made a late charge over the last four rounds.

The numbers tell the story, or a least a big part of it. CompuBox stats had Taylor landing 58 punches to Hopkins' 40 over the first eight rounds. More importantly, Taylor averaged 38 punches per round over that span, while Hopkins threw an average of 19, which translates into double the work rate. That's apparently what Ford and Smith based their scoring on, since Ford gave Taylor six of the first eight rounds and Smith gave him seven of eight.

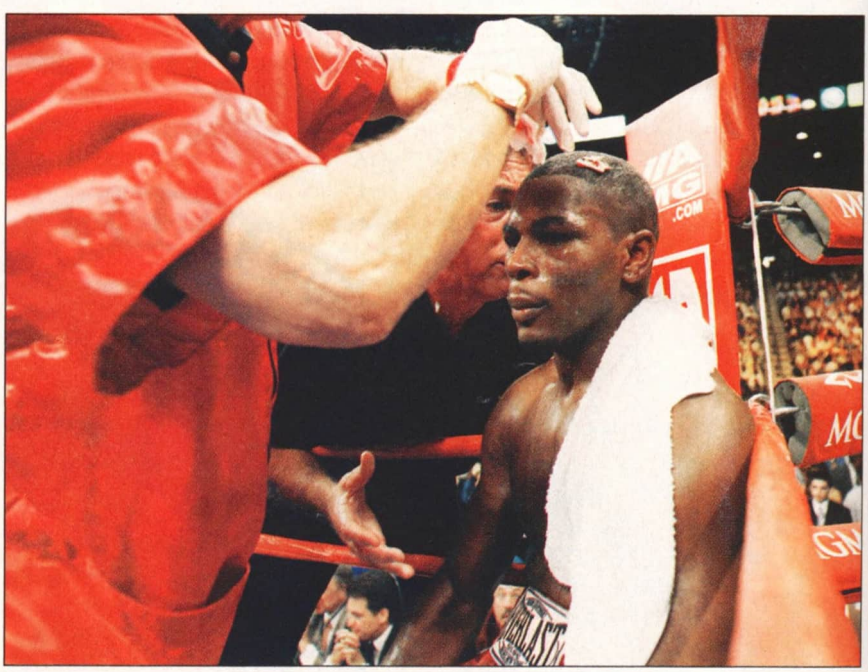
The final tabulations had judge Jerry Roth giving it to Hopkins, 116-112, with Ford and Smith each scoring it 115-113 for Taylor. THE RING favored Hopkins, 116-113. Controversy arose when Ford was the only judge to score the 12th for Taylor. A positive Hopkins tally on Ford's scorecard in the 12th would have ended the fight in a draw, and Hopkins would have retained the title.

Hopkins did land more punches in the last four rounds than he did during the initial eight (53 to 40), while Taylor's work rate decreased significantly, to just 23 connects, in the eighth through the 12th rounds.

The indelible image of Taylor down the stretch was that of a bewildered and retreating fighter, frequently holding for protection. Hopkins will get the chance to carry that momentum over into the rematch, tentatively slated for December 3, possibly back at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

But whereas Hopkins, 46-3-1 (32), dominated the rounds he won, Taylor, 24-0 (17), left some debate about what he accomplished, a qualm that clearly bothers the first middleweight champion of the world from Little Rock, Arkansas.

"Stop crying," Taylor said, referring to Hopkins' bitching about being robbed. But



An accidental clash of heads opened up a cut on Taylor's scalp in the fifth round that would leak blood intermittently the remainder of the fight. Fortunately for Taylor, the gash wasn't anywhere near his eyes and didn't threaten to end the fight.

Hopkins rallied strongly the final four rounds, landing a number of strong rights to Taylor's head, and there were several instances in the 10th and 11th rounds when the challenger was wobbled. Even so, two of the official judges thought it was a matter of too little, too late.

Taylor's comment could also be directed to anyone who doubted him—and continues to doubt him.

"I respect [Hopkins], and when he was champion I gave him so much respect because he deserved it," Taylor said. "Now I'm champion. At least give me the respect that I deserve. That's all I'm saying."

Entering the fight, skepticism hovered around Taylor. Despite his youth and obvious talent, he went off as a 7-to-5 underdog, which was understandable when you consider that a hefty portion of Taylor's undefeated record was built against smaller foes and suspect competition. His resume paled in comparison to Hopkins'.

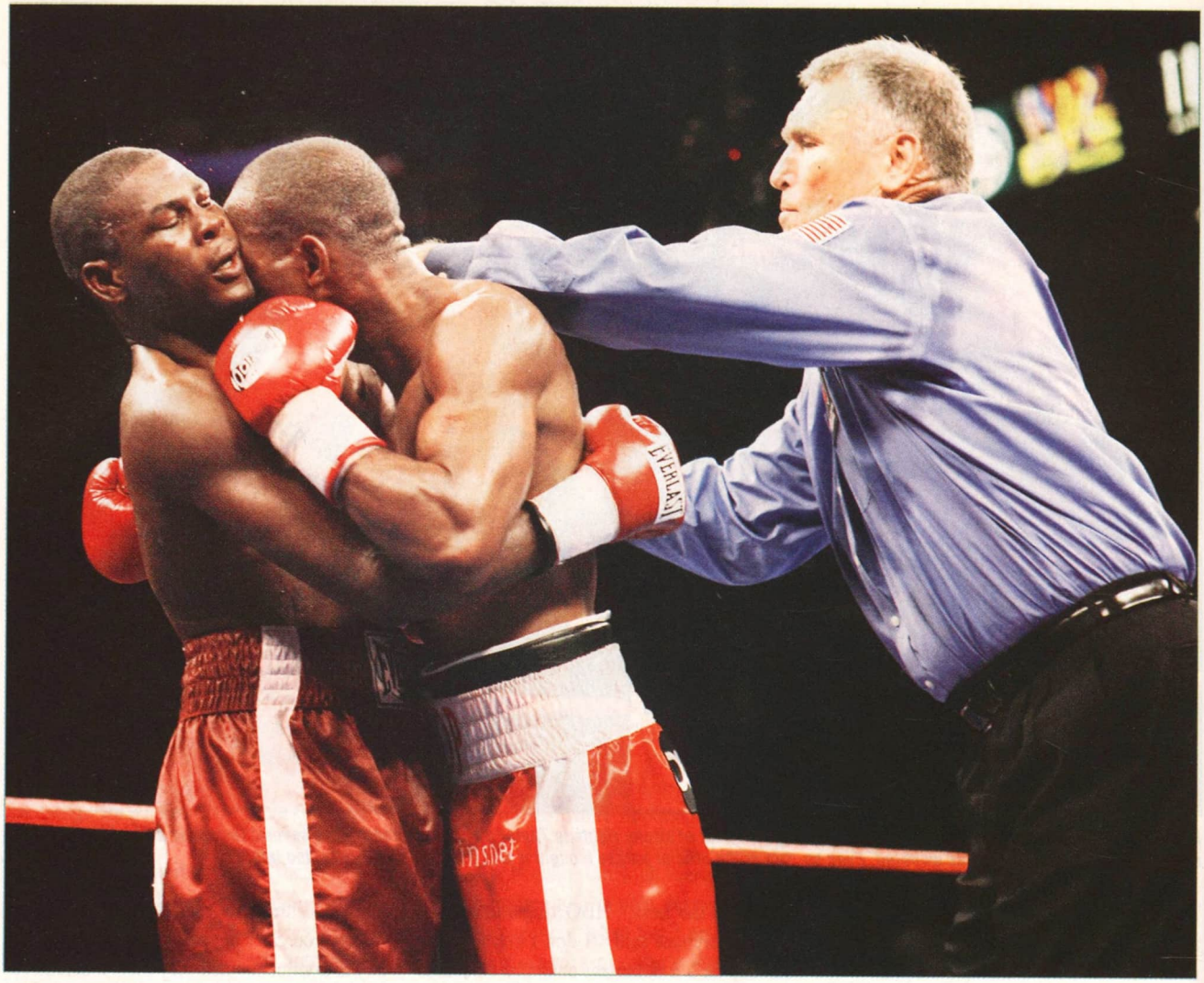
Moreover, Taylor had gone only 12 rounds twice in 23 fights, outpointing the overmatched Alfredo Cuevas and shop-worn Joppy. Some prognosticators didn't even think Taylor would finish on his feet, let alone beat someone who had not lost since Taylor was just 15 years old.

"Maybe it was justifiable skepticism entering the fight, but right now you'd have to say Jermain Taylor could beat any middleweight in the world, so I suppose you can say he is the best," HBO ringside analyst Larry Merchant said. "I don't know if you can say he's a dominant champion, because it's too early to tell. It's impossible to dominate a fighter the way Bernard Hopkins fights. You can't determine whether or not a guy is dominant when they meet a defensive fighter like Hopkins.

HOW THEY SCORED IT

There was, as usual in a close fight, a diversity of opinion among the media. Here is a representative sample:

NAME	AFFILIATION	SCORE
Joe Santoliquito	The Ring	116-113, Hopkins
Ivan Goldman	The Ring	117-111, Hopkins
Al Bernstein	Showtime	115-114, Taylor
Bernard Fernandez	*Philadelphia Daily News*	115-113, Hopkins
Brian Kenny	ESPN	115-113, Hopkins
Max Kellerman	HBO	115-113, Hopkins
Larry Merchant	HBO	115-114, Taylor
Robert Morales	*L.A. Daily News*	117-111, Hopkins
Tim Smith	*New York Daily News*	116-112, Hopkins
Ron Borges	*Boston Globe*	116-112, Hopkins
Steve Kim	MaxBoxing.com	117-111, Hopkins
Dan Rafael	ESPN.com	114-114, Draw
Michael Katz	Reuters	115-113, Hopkins
Kevin Iole	*Las Vegas Journal-Review*	115-113, Hopkins
Keith Idec	*New Jersey Herald News*	116-112, Hopkins



Referee Jay Nady, who handled the fight well, jumps in to pry the combatants apart. Taylor did a lot of holding the last few rounds, a clear sign that he was bothered by Hopkins' storming finish. But to his credit, Taylor refused to fold.

"But there isn't anyone out there that Taylor wouldn't be favored to beat. This kid has dominated everyone he's faced but Hopkins. So I'd have to say yes, probably, Taylor is the best middleweight in the world, until someone beats him. He beat a guy who hasn't lost in over 12 years. He's the best right now until proven otherwise. That's what beating a recognized champion and a fighter recognized as the best of his time does for you."

Opinions, however, differ, even among Merchant's HBO brethren.

"I thought Hopkins won the fight, so I still maintain that Hopkins is the best middleweight in the world," said Max Kellerman, another HBO analyst who worked the fight. "But after Hopkins, I put Taylor there. Hopkins had his hands full with Jermain, in a way that he didn't have his hands full with Eastman, Joppy, or Trinidad. So Taylor gave Hopkins his toughest fight since Segundo Mercado (D 12 in 1994).

"Frequently, the champion isn't always the best in the division. At any rate, I still think Hopkins is the best middleweight in the world, and I still think Jermain is his heir apparent. Jermain definitely displayed a championship quality. That fight was close enough to go either way, even though my scorecard read 115-113 for Hopkins. I'm not saying I think the outcome was an absolute travesty, even though the vast majority of the media feel Hopkins won, but because Jermain was busier, many people thought Taylor won based on that. I think the question has been answered that Jermain isn't better than Hopkins, right now. He's better than everyone but Bernard Hopkins."

Taylor had never been in trouble before as a pro, but the fifth round proved that the 27-year-old could handle adversity. An accidental clash of heads opened up a gaping cut on the left side of Taylor's scalp above the hairline. The gash was deep enough for referee Jay Nady to call a halt to the action so the ringside physician could take a look.

The fifth was a strong round for Hopkins, and it seemed to trigger some urgency in Taylor. With a steady stream of blood flowing down the left side of his face, the 2000 Olympic bronze medalist came charging after Hopkins in the sixth, landed a right to the body, and generally got off first throughout the round. It was the first time Taylor was genuinely pushed as a pro, and he reacted the way champions do, with aggression and without hesitation. Taylor didn't look unbeatable, but he did score serious respect points.

"I don't think Taylor got the respect he deserved after the fight," Merchant said. "There was a mixed reaction to the decision because a lot of people think you have to

dominate a champion, especially a veteran champion. The fact that for the kind of fight it was, with the champion dawdling for the first eight rounds and trying to steal the fight, says something about Taylor. Hopkins has a genius for bringing out the worst in his opponents, and because of that, I don't think Taylor got his full measure of credit. It's the first time someone has fought Hopkins on even terms since he faced Roy Jones."

Aside from Taylor, if there was one person who felt professional, as well as personal, vindication, it was Taylor's promoter, Lou DiBella, Hopkins' former advisor. Hopkins and DiBella had waged a personal war of words throughout the weekend of the fight, featuring a verbal confrontation that made Hopkins go back to his North Philadelphia roots on the weigh-in platform the day before the fight, when he said to DiBella, "Lou, I'm the reason why your wife is divorcing you."

The DiBella-Hopkins feud, stemming from a successful lawsuit DiBella lodged against Hopkins for defamation, made a juicy subplot. More gasoline was tossed on the ashy embers after the fight.

"Bernard is a f___ing a-hole, and you can quote me on that," said a still-agitated DiBella. "He's given my kid less than no credit, and while I know Bernard is an expert at theft and larceny from the many he pulled in Pennsylvania, this clearly wasn't one of them. He refuses to lose like a man, and refuses to give my kid any credit. I'm just sick of all the bellyaching. Jermain Taylor is the undisputed middleweight champion of the world. He's only scratched the surface of what he is fully capable of, and he's a young fighter getting better with every fight.

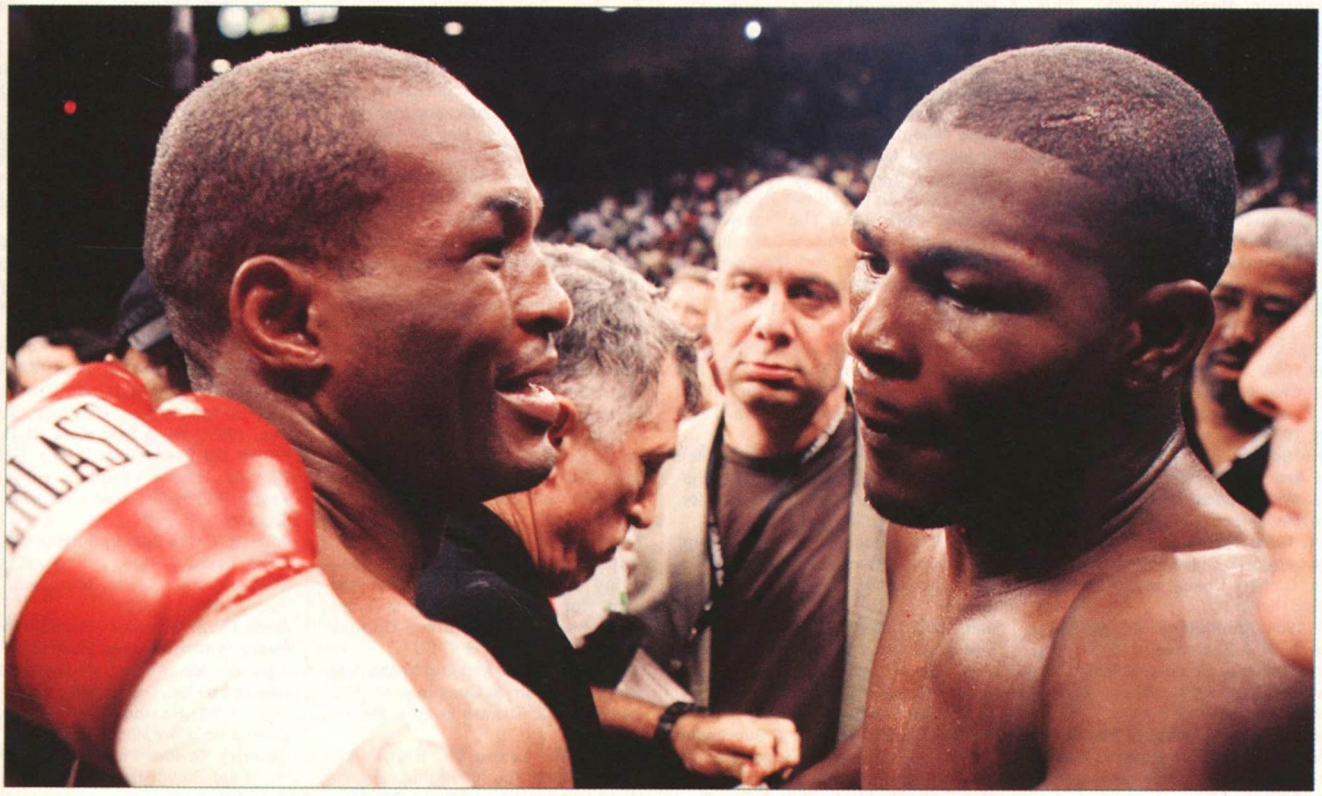
"Bernard is going to get beat up next time. Mark my words. He isn't getting any younger and my kid isn't getting any worse. We are supremely confident of the rematch. No one was scared of Bernard Hopkins the first fight and we're a lot less scared now. Hopkins lost like a punk. And I don't give a damn what the media thinks. Jermain is the best middleweight in the world and he hasn't even reached his potential, but Hopkins is an old man ready to leave the game. He's had a Hall of Fame career, I can't take that away from him, but he's now the second-best middleweight in the world."

Hopkins has been uncharacteristically subdued. "People saw what happened, they saw the fight, they've seen replays of the fight, the people and the media have spoken, and they know I won," Hopkins said. "Videotape doesn't lie. This was a travesty. I'll just have to knock Jermain Taylor out the next time. It seems that's the only way I can get a break. But I have to admit, this places me in a very unusual situation—I have the media actually feeling sorry for me this time."

A more definitive answer as to whether or not Taylor is the best 160-pounder will be decided in the rematch. Even Taylor wasn't thrilled with the manner in which he won.

"I wasted a lot of unnecessary energy in this fight," Taylor said. "I didn't win the fight like I wanted to win. I have never lost a round in this profession. Just to lose those rounds, it was killing me. It wasn't like I had planned it in my head. In the rematch, you can expect to see a totally different fighter."

The first fight did better PPV number than expected, and with the interest created by the controversy, the rematch will be even bigger. Hopefully, there will be a clear-cut result the next time. Without a doubt, Hopkins will be seeking redemption and his old title back. Taylor is looking for confirmation, the sort of definitive victory where he can hold his head high—knowing full well that this time he *is* the best in the world. ■



Prior to the announcement of the decision, Hopkins looked much happier than Taylor and his manager, Lou DiBella, who is pictured with a glum expression on his face between the two fighters. Even though his man got the nod shortly after this photo was taken, DiBella is still angry, feeling that Taylor didn't get the credit he deserved. "Bernard is going to get beat up next time," DiBella said.

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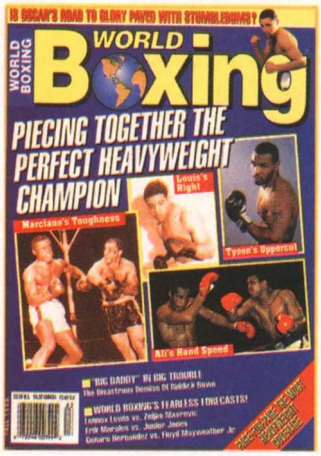

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CORRALES-CASTILLO II

20 Experts Select The Winner

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Compiled by Joe Santoliquito

How do you improve upon perfection? You can't. But Diego Corrales and Jose Luis Castillo will make an attempt, when the two face each other in their October 8 rematch at Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas.

It was only a few short months ago—May 7—that these lightweights put on an epic battle that will doubtlessly stand the test of time as one of the sport's all-time greats. The only drawback to that fight was that it occurred before a sparse crowd. Fighting before what is expected

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PHOTOS BY CHRIS FARINA

Many pundits wonder if Castillo and Corrales can endure the same amount of pain and punishment they inflicted on each other in their classic first fight on May 7.

to be a live sellout and a large Showtime pay-per-view audience, will the fighters make a conscious effort to put on a fireworks display, or will they settle into a more technically sound, strategic encounter?

Many experts feel the first fight should be locked away and kept for posterity—a shining example of why boxing is so great. Their concerns stem from the health of both fighters, since Corrales, 40-2 (33), and Castillo, 52-7-1 (46), physically extended themselves beyond anyone's expectations in the first fight.

History dictates that the sequel cannot possibly match the original. When Muhammad Ali met Joe Frazier the second time in Madison Square Garden, the two put on a forgettable display, as Ali was very wary of making the same mistakes he made in their first fight.

The same could happen here. Corrales could choose to wage war from the outside, use his boxing ability, and play it safe. Castillo may be less willing to engage Corrales, considering the 10th-round stoppage he suffered in their first fight, after Castillo had knocked down Corrales twice earlier in the round.

Here's what 20 experts had to say in response to the question: Who will win the Corrales-Castillo world lightweight championship fight and why?

RON BORGES (***Boston Globe*** *boxing writer*): "It can't be any better than the first fight; it's impossible. The thing that always worries me about great fights is that the rematch is not often that good, because the two fighters aren't as willing to take the punishment they did the first time. The first time, you don't know what the cost will be. A lot of times both guys become more cautious. If they're not more cautious, they'll need CATscans. The problem with Castillo is that Corrales can take what he dishes out. He's apparently able to recover quicker that Castillo. It's a tough fight to pick, but I think Corrales will stop Castillo again. These guys wouldn't fight to a decision if they fought 100 times."

CALVIN WATKINS (***Dallas Morning News*** *boxing writer*): "No great fight usually follows with a great sequel. You have to wonder whether or not these guys want to go through the physical pain of the first one. They may come into this very cautious. 'Chico' came out of that first one pretty beat up, and he was the one who won. Castillo thought he was

winning the first one, until Corrales caught him in the 10th round. I think Castillo will be a little worried about facing that punch and that will enable him to win the rematch."

ROBERT MORALES (*Los Angeles Daily News boxing writer*): "I think it will be another absolutely brutal fight, because they can't fight any differently. Corrales has tremendous courage, and Castillo's almost-equal courage and tremendous pride is a combination that will make for another tremendous fight. Often the rematch doesn't live up to the first fight, but this one could come close. The first fight was the most brutal, tremendous fight I've seen in 12 years as a boxing writer. I went with Corrales the first time and I'll go with Corrales again. I see another late-round TKO by Corrales."

MAX KELLERMAN (*HBO boxing analyst*): "I like Corrales, and I like him a little more dominantly this time. I think Corrales will knock him out a round earlier. I think it's going to be a great fight and this will define both of their legacies, but it's obviously a health hazard. For the rest of us, thankfully, they decided to put their lives on the line and created the best drama any sport has seen in many years."

DAN RAFAEL (*ESPN.com boxing writer*): "It can't be as good as the first fight, but the second fight can still be another great fight. To me, it's a toss-up fight. If Corrales decides to box just a little more, or box at all, he can win the fight and make it a lot easier than the first one. Corrales is the one capable of changing his style, not Castillo. It's up to Corrales how the fight will go. If I had to pick a winner, I'll take Corrales reluctantly, by a decision."

ROCK ALLEN (*former United States Olympian*): "Their first fight was the most exciting fight I ever saw, from the first bell. It was pure action, just punches from all over. Castillo got caught and caught at the worst end, so I have to go with Corrales with this one. He's a big 135, and when he makes the fight, he's proved to be strong. I really can't see these guys doing too much boxing. I see this being a replay of the first time, and Castillo has something to prove. This might not last as long as the first one."

LEM SATTERFIELD (*Baltimore Sun boxing writer*): "I think Corrales will win, even though he says that he'll brawl. He likes the action. Of the two fighters, I believe Castillo absorbs punishment better. So Corrales would be better suited to employ more boxing this time. It may not be a way to make the fight more exciting, but it is a way to make the fight a little

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Castillo was on the verge of putting Corrales away in round 10, but Chico courageously drew on whatever he had left and staged a final rally to force the stoppage. The initial fight could have gone either way, which makes the outcome of the rematch so difficult to forecast.

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Most on our panel of experts feel the rematch will end inside the distance. Corrales may set out to box more, but could we be drawn into a war again.

easier for him. The same way that Arturo Gatti had to back off his brawling style after the three Micky Ward fights, Corrales could be better served by working behind his jab, particularly against a warrior like Castillo. Corrales boxed more in his rematch with Joel Casamayor, and he'll use those same tactics this time to win by decision."

LARRY MERCHANT (*HBO ringside color analyst*): "Having proven his manhood in the first fight, I expect that Corrales will get a better fitting mouthpiece and fight a smarter fight in the rematch. He will try to use his height to a better advantage, because whenever he used it in the first fight it was a much easier fight for him. I think Corrales by decision, but the burden of proof is on him to see if he can withstand prosperity."

KINGSLEY IKEKE (*middleweight contender*): "This time Corrales is going to put the fight away right away. He's going to work it the right way and work to take Castillo out this time. He's hard working and boxing goes like that. This will be quicker and he'll do things the smart way."

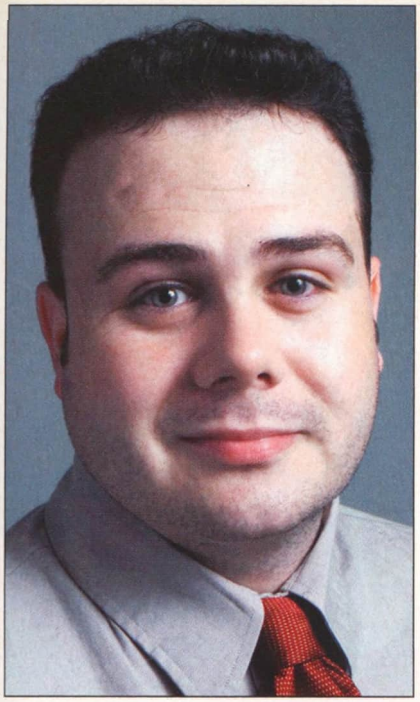
GARY GITTLESOHN (*boxing manager*): "I don't think this fight will come close to the first one. They're both wary of what they went through the first time, and it's only natural that neither one relishes the opportunity to go through it again. They may not know any other way to fight than the way they went at each other the first time. But neither guy will want to engage in the same kind of fight that they did the first time. I sway toward Castillo. I think he's a more durable fighter, Corrales the stronger puncher. I chose the more durable fighter in this contest by decision."

BERNARD FERNANDEZ (***Philadelphia Daily News*** *boxing writer*): "I picked Castillo the last time and it was a shaky selection because I knew the matchup was so tight, and the actual fight was as close on paper. Castillo maybe should have won and could have won, but I figure I'll go to the well again and go with Castillo. I see it as a late-round stoppage, because I can't see these guys going 12 rounds."

JOEY GILBERT (*middleweight from* ***The Contender*** *show*): "I don't know if they can out-do the first one. Those two almost killed each other. The expectations placed on this fight will be there again. People expect them to come in and do the same thing, but in this situation, you're dealing with two experienced, intelligent fighters, and that being said, they may not make this an absolute war. It'll still be an explosive fight, but you're dealing with two veterans who both know they hurt each other. They won't trade blindly this time. I would have to say, based on Chico's ability to adapt and customize his fight plan and strategy, I think he pulls this out by late-round stoppage."

CHUCK JOHNSON (***USA Today*** *boxing writer*): "I didn't think there would be a rematch after watching that first fight. Both parties realized they spent themselves, but I foresee another fight just like it. Neither of those guys will back down and they showed they could damage each other. I see the same type of brutal battle. Castillo, on my scorecard, was winning that fight at the time of the stoppage. It could be a stoppage again. There's no telling what can happen, but I say Castillo this time."

CARLOS ARIAS (***Orange County Register*** *boxing writer*): "I liked Corrales



Keith Idec of the **Herald News of New Jersey** *is one of the experts who questions why there has to be rematch: "I think they should leave well enough alone and not do it. They can't do the first fight justice," he says.*

in the first fight, and you know that Corrales has the ability to dig down, after being knocked down and finding something within him to pull out a victory. We saw that Castillo had that same ability himself. Not only can Corrales punch, he can box. Castillo has the one style, where he wears you down during the course of a fight and takes you out in the end. Corrales' added dimension gives him the edge. There is no way this goes the distance. Once the punches start flying, they won't go away. This will be a late-round stoppage again for Corrales."

DON STEINBERG (***Philadelphia Inquirer*** *boxing writer*): "Both guys will train for what beat them the first time. I like Corrales. He got caught a couple of times in that crazy 10th round and he still won. All his training is going to be aimed at boxing more, and not letting that happen again. After that, it's almost hard to picture him losing."

BRIAN KENNY (***ESPN2 Friday Night Fights*** *studio host*): "I think the authorities should step in and stop this fight, because having been there and seen it, these two guys shouldn't fight again. It's going to harm one of them, if not both of them, but I think Corrales will step back a bit and fight a little more on the outside. Eventually, they're going to get into each other's grill and decide it like men. If I have to pick someone, I'd go with Corrales. I think he's more likely to win on points."

ROB MURRAY (*radio host of* ***This Week In Boxing*** *on Philadelphia's 900 AM WURD*): "Very seldom do you see rematches of fights like that equaling what happened in the first fight. This has the makings of being that type of fight. This can be a smaller, more sophisticated version of Gatti-Ward. Corrales will be able to draw Castillo into a real grudge fight. This will probably turn into a trilogy, even though I pick Corrales to stop Castillo again."

KEITH IDEC (***Herald News of New Jersey*** *boxing writer*): "I think they should leave well enough alone and not do it. They can't do the first fight justice. But Corrales is always better and smarter in rematches, and he might not try to make this fight so difficult on himself early as he did in the first fight. If Corrales boxes Castillo and fights from a safer distance, he should be able to outpoint Castillo without going through that excruciating pain again. I see Corrales winning by unanimous decision."

BERNARDO OSUNA (***Solo Boxeo*** *broadcaster*): "I love the rematch and I think it's the right thing to do for boxing. This will really help boxing out. Castillo, I think, can win this time because he had the fight won last time and made a miscalculation. This will be the same type of brawl. Castillo will be more of a defensive fighter and Corrales will be working on his defense as well, but their basic instinct will make them fight the same way they did the first time. Corrales can change things up a little more, but for Castillo, he's looking for redemption. In the end, Castillo gained more by losing, and I see him winning by stoppage."

TONY PAIGE (*radio host for New York's* ***WFAN*** *660 AM*): "Whatever they want to pay for this one, it's worth it. Even if they put on half the fight they did the first time, it's a Fight of the Year candidate. The first fight was Hagler-Hearns stretched out over 10 rounds. I lean toward Castillo because he made one mistake and paid for it, while Corrales made a bunch. I'll say Castillo by decision."

Final tally: Corrales 13, Castillo 7. ■

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

In the end, the majority of our experts feel Corrales will come out on top again—this time, however, looking much better than he did after the initial meeting.

AMIR KHAN:
THE NEW FACE OF BRITISH BOXING

Along with Ricky Hatton, the youthful Khan is leading a renaissance in British boxing. His Olympic success and popularity have also made him a unifying force between Muslims and non-Muslims in the wake of the terrorist bombings in London. Khan entered the ring for his pro debut carrying the Union Jack (inset).

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

By Brian Doogan

Amir Khan had just produced fireworks, the likes of which few in British boxing had ever witnessed from a fighter in his first professional bout. The 17-year-old kid from the Olympic Games in Athens, who lost to the brilliant Cuban lightweight, Mario Kindelan, in the fight for gold, had dispatched David Bailey, a car mechanic from London, with the ease, conviction, and hardness of a veteran of the ring.

"Speed," declared Bailey's manager, Eugene Maloney. "The boy's like lightning."

Ricky Hatton, commentating for British TV network ITV, announced from ringside: "When you're a young fighter, you don't want people blowing smoke up your backside. You want the truth, and the truth is that was as good a debut as I've ever seen."

Barry McGuigan, also working for ITV, concurred.

Yet here was Khan, sitting on a sofa in the DeVere Whites Hotel, adjacent to the Bolton Arena, speaking not about his one-round win, but about the recent bombings in London and how this was a time to be bringing people together.

PHOTO BY PETER MACDIARMID/GETTY IMAGES

A Unifying Force In Trying Times

PHOTO BY CLIVE ROSE/GETTY IMAGES

Khan and his proud parents at the Lauresus World Sports Awards in Estoril, Portugal, in May 2005, where Amir was among the honorees. The elder Khan is a scarp-metal merchant who moved to England from Pakistan with his family when he was a child. Amir was born in the U.K.

"We need to bring the races together now. I'm upset about what's been happening, and all my family and friends have been knocked back by it all too," he said. "We need people to help stop things like the London bombs from happening, and hopefully, I can be one of these people. I'll do anything I can to help."

A British Muslim, proud and devout, who prays at the mosque every Friday and reads the Koran, it was easy to forget that he is still only 18, so young to be bearing this kind of responsibility on his shoulders. But he felt that it was right and proper to dedicate his victory to the dozens of victims whose lives had been claimed, falsely, in the name of Islam when bombs ripped through three trains on the London Underground and on the top deck of a London bus. With not a trace of duplicity in his motives, Khan had stood and waved the Union Jack in the ring. The word 'London' had been sewn into the middle of the flag in mournful black lettering.

"I feel completely British," explained the son of a scrap-metal merchant from Bolton called Shah, who arrived in Britain from Rawalpindi in Pakistan with his family as a small child. "I loved making the British people happy at the Olympics. I was born here, grew up here, and went to school here, just like everyone else. If I can bring different races together, that is great. Maybe I can help stop some problems. I remember when I went to the boxing gym for the first time, I was the only Asian kid there. Since the Olympics, I've seen a lot more in the gym.

"Growing up, I went to a school where there were Asian and British kids and they were my friends. We all chilled together. Britain's a great country because there are so many races. Give it another few years, and I reckon things will change. Everyone will be hanging out with each other and racism will fade away."

To Khan's left, promoter Frank Warren sat and barely spoke. What was there to say? The young fighter had marched to the ring without fear, just as he had in Athens and just as he did in a rematch against Kindelan in May, when he reversed the result of the Olympic final with a virtuoso display. Now here he was, saying what needed to be said with maturity beyond his years. In Khan's hometown, leaders of the local Muslim community have described him as "somebody who can instill confidence," a unifying force who "has brought the whole community together." Bolton's mayor, Prentice Howarth, declared that "he and his family have done more for race relations in the town than anybody else in the past 40 years." Finally, Warren speculated on the impact Khan will have on British boxing over the next 10 years.

"Watching Amir and listening to him, since I've got to know him, has convinced me that he is capable of changing the face of British boxing," he said. "He is not just a fantastic kid, he's also a role model for young British people of all races and colors. That's something British boxing, and maybe British life, desperately needs."

Just a few weeks previously, Khan had flown to Cuba to meet again with his Olympic rival, Kindelan. He and his father went out to a restaurant one night in Havana, a favorite of Teofilio Stevenson's, where Cuba's favorite fighting son has often sat in the middle of the room, like a king, drinking rum and telling his war stories. When the teenager from a far-flung island arrived unannounced, he was embraced by the owner almost as warmly as Stevenson would be.

"You beat Mario Kindelan," the owner said excitedly. "I must have a picture with you."

Kindelan had been another Stevenson, his conquests celebrated as Cuba's conquests. The winner of gold medals at three world championships and two Olympics, Kindelan rejected $1-million offers from both Sugar Ray Leonard and Evander Holyfield to defect and turn professional. Khan's defeat

of "Super Mario" in their heavily hyped rematch of the Olympic final persuaded the Cuban people to receive their visitor like one of their own. Even the Sports Minister, Humberto Rodriguez, insisted on seeing him.

"The Cuban people admire your qualities as an athlete and your modesty," he said to Khan in front of a gathering that included Stevenson, Felix Savon, also a three-time Olympic gold medalist at heavyweight, and Kindelan. "You fought Mario Kindelan in your hometown in a bout that was not just about competition, but proved that language and cultural barriers can be overcome. You are a friend of Cuba because you are a friend of Kindelan."

In Havana's streets, as the salsa music poured out of radios, people clamored for Khan's autograph and made him pose for pictures.

"It's mad," he said, smiling. "I'm 18 years old, in Cuba, and people know who I am—and they like me as well."

For Khan, anonymity will no longer be possible. His mother has stopped sending him to the corner shop, for he was returning an hour later. Every step of the way there were people keen to know how he's been doing. When he had his eyes tested in Stockport, part of the process of getting his professional license from the British Boxing Board of Control, an old woman, with tears in her eyes, told his father, Shah, how she never watches boxing but she followed Khan's progress in Athens and will look out for him whenever he fights. And the most endearing part about him is that celebrity hasn't changed him.

"He's no different now, just the same boy who went to Athens with a dream of winning a medal," his father declared proudly in the Bolton Arena. "He's good with everybody he meets, and that's why people love him."

His youthful promise helped to persuade executives at ITV to broadcast boxing again on terrestrial television, after a virtual 10-year hiatus.

"We saw the huge potential of boxing on ITV when we promoted the Khan-Kindelan rematch in May and it delivered fantastic TV ratings, 6.3 million viewers, which beat everything else that night and is the biggest Saturday night viewership this year," declared Warren. "There's no doubt Amir has the potential to be a star."

The peak viewing audience for Khan-Bailey was 4.4 million. After scaling the heights as a child prodigy in amateur boxing, the question he faced was a simple one: Could he take the same confident strides into the paid ranks against a car mechanic from London, one who prepared by rising at six every morning to do his roadwork, went to work at his father's garage after breakfast, trained at Maloney's Fight Factory in the afternoon, and returned to the garage before finishing work at seven every evening?

"I know the meaning of hard work," Bailey promised.

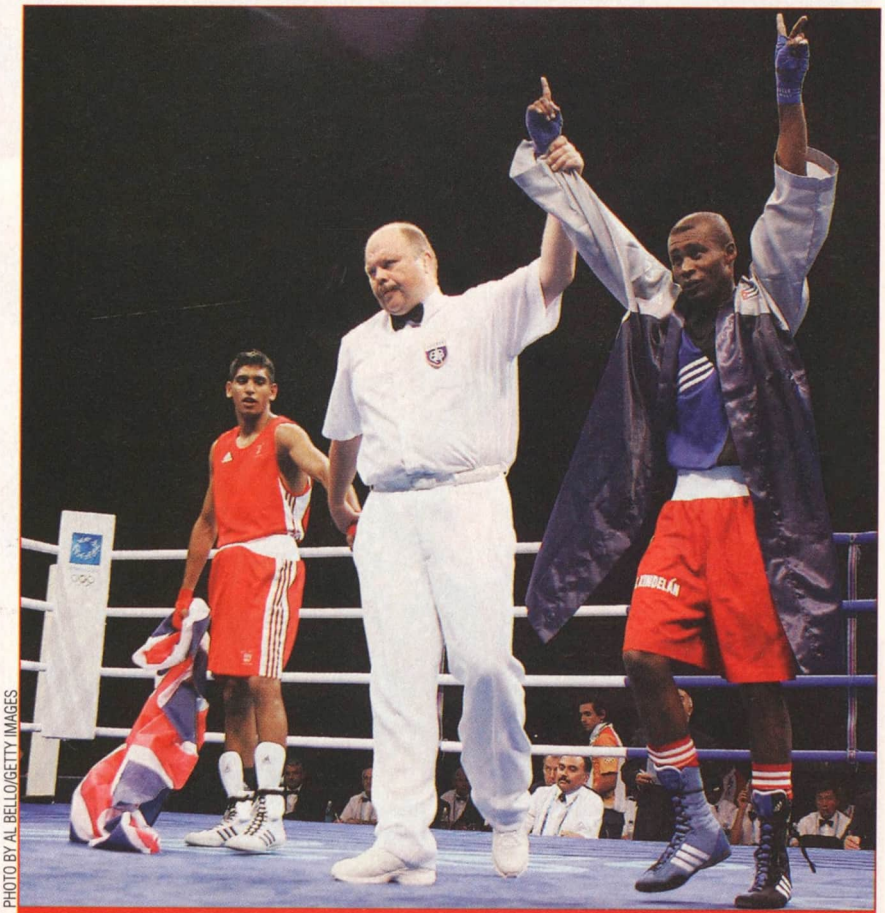


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Khan rocketed to fame in the U.K. as a 17-year-old phenom at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. Even his loss to Cuban ace Mario Kindelan in the gold medal match didn't dampen the British peoples' enthusiasm for the baby-faced boxer. In May 2005, prior to turning pro, Khan avenged the loss by beating Kindelan in an England vs. Cuba tournament in Khans' hometown of Bolton.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY JOGN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Headgear gone, Khan took the professional plunge on July 16 before a packed house at the Bolton Arena and a national TV audience. His opponent, southpaw David Bailey, came in with seven pro bouts under his belt (3-4) and was a reasonable test for Khan's debut.

Soon he knew the meaning, too, of a hard night. Khan arrived in the ring inside the Bolton Arena to the patriotic strains of "Land Of Hope And Glory." Within seconds of the bell ringing, Bailey was right on him, asking questions of his nerve and his stomach for a battle in the trenches. The 24-year-old southpaw sported a modest record of 3-4 (0), but he had never been stopped and his strategy was clearly one of trying to induce some degree of fright and panic into his young foe.

But Khan was prepared for every eventuality and, with not a hint of reluctance, he responded to this wild baptismal call.

Brilliantly, he sidestepped Bailey's crude swings with both hands, using the same nifty footwork he had used against Kindelan in their rematch. But against Bailey, he also displayed power and ruthlessness, the kind of which he will need to show plenty of in the future.

There was firm evidence of him having learnt from his earliest lessons in the gym with Oliver Harrison, the Salford-based trainer in whom Khan and his team have entrusted his development. Bailey was thrust to the canvas by a flurry of vicious punches from Khan, culminating in a right uppercut and a short right hook. He stayed down for a count of nine, but Khan was straight back on him, firing furiously with both fists and flooring Bailey with a right cross and left hook. Bailey rose bravely, at referee Phil Edwards' count of nine, but he was quickly in trouble again, trapped along the ropes, and the referee must have considered calling a halt. But Bailey stayed upright and Khan punished him some more, throwing another combination of powerful punches before the referee finally intervened. The fight was over in 109 seconds. In that time, Khan had shown terrific balance, gracefully fluid movement, diamond-hard nerve, and lightning speed.

"I know that every fighter I face will be trying to knock me out or beat me because of the name I have from the Olympics," Khan reflected. "I'd watched tapes of Bailey and I saw that I'd boxed better opponents than him in the amateurs. But it was his chance to make a name for himself and that kept me on my toes. I'm a lot stronger now than I was even six months ago or three months ago. A couple of weeks before the Kindelan fight here in Bolton, I did an exercise in Billy Graham's gym in Manchester, where Ricky Hatton trains, where you jump a beam for a minute, then go and punch the bag for a minute before going back to jump the beam for the final minute. I nearly died doing three rounds of that. Now I do four three-minute rounds of that and work the pads with Oliver in between.

"My plan is to fight every couple of months, to stay active and gain all the experience I can as quickly as I can. I have a poster of Muhammad Ali on my bedroom wall, and one day I want to be a legend like him. I'm certain this will happen."

Ted "Kid" Lewis remains Britain's youngest ever world champion, winning the world welterweight title in 1915, 54 days short of his 21st birthday. Khan, whose eyes are bright, burning coals, has the look of the innocent about him still, and when he looks into his future he sees it remaining unblemished.

"By the age of 25, I'd like to be a world champion at a couple of weights," he said. "I'd have a family, live in a big house, and have a nice car. I'll retire at 25, 26 and get into some businesses, maybe do a degree at university. The rest of the time I'll chill, stay at home, and get fat. I'll have done so much by then that by the time I'm 25 I'll be exhausted." ■

Brian Doogan, THE RING's European correspondent, was ringside in Bolton for Khan's pro debut.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Khan performed admirably against Bailey, avoiding his fired-up foe's early rush and responding with two knockdowns en route to a TKO first-round victory. Only 18 years old, Khan has a good chance of becoming the youngest-ever British world champion.

BACK ISSUES OF KO

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Aug. 1983: Michael Spinks: King Of The Light Heavyweights ... But The Glory Can't Erase The Sadness. Color Pinup: Johnny Bumphus. Interview: Jones & Rappaport. Also: Jones-McCrory, Pryor-Arguello II preview, world's best fighter poll, Jeff Chandler, Mark Breland, Leon Spinks.

Oct. 1983: Is Larry Holmes Finished? Color Pinup: Greg Page. Interview: Marvis Frazier. Also: Marvin Hagler, Bobby Chacon, Jack Dempsey.

July 1984: Donald Curry: "I'm Better Under Pressure." Color Pinup: Gerrie Coetzee. Interview: Curry. Also: Pipino Cuevas, John Mugabi, Bill Costello, M. Spinks-Davis.

Aug. 1984: WBC Heavyweight Champion Terrible Tim Witherspoon: A Superstar Of Tomorrow? Color Pinup: Rocky Lockridge. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Marvin Hagler, Gomez-LaPorte.

Oct. 1984: Golden Boy Mark Breland: Can He Be The Next Sugar Ray? Color Pinup: Jaime Garza. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Bramble-Mancini, Sugar Ray Leonard.

Nov. 1984: Thomas Hearns: "Hagler Is Shakin' Like A Leaf On A Tree!" Color Pinup: Tim Witherspoon. Interview: Livingstone Bramble. Also: Rosario-Davis, Marlon Starling.

Feb. 1985: Gerry Cooney: How Far Can He Go This Time? Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Ray Mancini. Also: Dream fights, Hector Camacho.

March 1985: Next For Marvelous Marvin Hagler: The Only Fight That Really Matters. Color Pinup: Mike McCallum. Interview: Thomas Hearns. Also: Santos-Medal, Meza-Garza, Holmes-Bonecrusher.

May 1985: Thomas Hearns: *KO* Fighter Of The Year. Color Pinup: Gerry Cooney. Also: Camacho-Ramirez, Truth Williams, Year In Review.

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Aug. 1985: King Cobra: "Hagler-Hearns Is Done And I'm Better Than Both Of Them!" Color Pinup: John Mugabi. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Larry Holmes, Roberto Duran, DeWitt-Lee.

Oct. 1985: Still Champ After All These Years: Larry Holmes—A Legend Continues To Grow. Interview: Mark Breland. Also: Michael Spinks, Milton McCrory, Wilfredo Gomez.

Nov. 1985: McGuigan! The Pluck Of The Irish. Also: Julio Cesar Chavez, Thomas-Weaver, Donald Curry, featherweights.

Dec. 1985: Pinklon Thomas: "Larry Holmes Betrayed Boxing." Color Pinup: Hagler-Mugabi. Also: Mike McCallum, Tyrell Biggs, Camacho-Ramirez.

Jan. 1986: Macho Mania! Hector Camacho Takes Aim At 10 Tough Targets. Color Pinup: Jimmy Paul. Interview: Alexis Arguello. Also: Truth Williams, Curry-McCrory.

Feb. 1986: King Michael: How Long Will He Rule The Heavyweights? Also: Barry McGuigan, Shawn O'Sullivan, Spinks-Holmes, *Rocky IV*, world's best fighter poll.

Oct. 1986: They're Back!!! The Cooney Circus Returns. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Jimmy Paul, Mike Tyson, Donald Curry.

Dec. 1986: Larry Holmes' Message To Mike Tyson: "Show Me You Can Kick My Butt!" Color pinup: Mark Breland. Interview: Holmes. Also: Witherspoon-Bruno, Evander Holyfield, Cruz-McGuigan, Danny Lopez.

Feb. 1987: Upset Of The Decade: Has Honeyghan Cut Short The Curry Era? Color Pinup: Marvin Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Edwin Rosario, Hector Camacho.

June 1987: New WBA Welterweight Champion Mark Breland: He's Got A Lot To Smile About. Interview: Marvin Hagler. Color Pinup: Greg Haugen. Also: Michael Olajide, Carlos Monzon.

Oct. 1987: Greatness Beckons: When Will Mike Tyson Answer The Call? Color Pinup: Michael Olajide. Interview: Tyrell Biggs. Also: Paz-Haugen, Marvin Hagler.

Nov. 1987: Michael Spinks: The War With Tyson Is Okay With Him. Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: Frankie Duarte. Also: Matthew Hilton, Hagler-Czyz.

Dec. 1987: Mike Tyson: Undisputed Heavyweight King—But Is He Losing His Loyal Subjects? Color Pinup: Matthew Hilton. Interview: Barry McGuigan. Also: Aaron Pryor, Mike McCallum.

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Feb. 1988: Pazienza & Haugen Go For Each Other's Throats. Color Pinup: Marlon Starling. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Tate-Olajide, ESPN Boxing.

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Sept. 1988: Tyson-Spinks, The Aftermath—What If Tyson Wins; What If Spinks Wins? Color Pinup: Frank Tate. Interview: Marlon Starling. Also: Barry McGuigan, Simon Brown, risk-taking.

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Jan. 1989: The Troubled Times Of Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Lloyd Honeyghan. Interview: Gil Clancy. Also: Meldrick Taylor, Jeff Fenech, Boxing's Champs.

Aug. 1989: Special 100th Issue. Color Pinup: Hagler vs. Hearns. Also: The *KO* Years, 50 most influential people, '80s ratings, best of *KO* Interview, year-by-year review, Sugar Ray Robinson.

Sept. 1989: "I Beat Up Tyson Before, I'll Do It Again," by Carl Williams. Color Pinup: Michael Nunn. Also: Chavez-Mayweather, Brian Mitchell, Marv Albert.

Feb. 1990: George Foreman Risks A Multimillion-Dollar Shot At Tyson. Color Pinup: Brian Mitchell. Interview: Riddick Bowe. Also: Simon Brown, Molina-Lopez, East vs. West.

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Aug. 1990: Meldrick Taylor: Brilliance In Defeat. Color Pinup: Buster Douglas. Interview: Teddy Atlas. Also: Buddy McGirt, Dokes-Ruddock, Simon Brown.

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June 1991: Exclusive *KO* Interview: Evander Holyfield. Color Pinup: Raul Perez. Also: Norris-Leonard, Charles Williams, champs of 1971 vs. 1991, J.C. Chavez.

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Jan. 1992: The Tyson-Holyfield Showdown: An Exclusive Forecast By George Foreman. Color Pinup: Myung Woo Yuh. Also: Fenech-Nelson, TV announcers, boxing's toughest men, Toney-McCallum.

March 1992: *KO* Interview Mike Tyson: An In-Depth, Toe-To-Toe Talk With Boxing's Biggest Star. Color Pinup: Michael Moorer. Also: Thomas Hearns, Tracy Patterson, Larry Holmes, best fighter poll.

May 1992: Division-By-Division Faceoffs: The Best Of '92 vs. The Best Of '67. Color Pinup: James Warring. Interview: Hector Camacho. Also: Tommy Morrison, Bert Cooper, Gianfranco Rosi.

June 1992: If Not Tyson Or Holyfield, Then Who? Bowe? Moorer? Ruddock? Lewis? Mercer? Color Pinup: James Toney. Interview: Shelly Finkel. Also: Scotty Olson, overrated and underrated fighters, Orlin Norris, Whitaker-Pineda.

July 1992: The Title Reign of Evander Holyfield: A Reason To Hide ... Or A Reason For Pride? Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Julian Jackson. Also: Kelley-Dorsey, Nelson-Fenech, Kennedy McKinney.

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Oct. 1992: The Olympics: Golden Memories ... And Golden Futures? Color Pinup: Reggie Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Genaro Hernandez, Terry Norris.

Nov. 1992: Foreman vs. Holmes: The Fight Evander Holyfield Should Have Prevented. Color Pinup: Iran Barkley. Interview: Joey Gamache. Also: Hector Camacho, Tracy Patterson, Rudy Zavala.

Dec. 1992: The Final Four: Ruddock vs. Lewis, Holyfield vs. Bowe. Color Pinup: Genaro Hernandez. Interview: Lennox Lewis. Also: Whitaker-Pineda, Bowe-Coetzer, Alex Stewart, Gamache-Lopez.

Jan. 1993: Holyfield vs. Bowe: Who Will Win And Why. Color Pinup: Al Cole. Interview: Vinny Pazienza. Also: James Toney, Terrence Alli, Maurice Blocker.

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Dec. 1993: The *KO* Feud Rages On: "I Will Torture You!" Says Riddick Bowe To Lennox Lewis. Color Pinup: Kennedy McKinney. Also: Mississippi boxing, George Foreman, Yori Boy Campas , Carbajal-Kim, Morrison-Moorer.

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Sept. 1996: Tyson vs. Seldon. Don't Bet On This Fight Until You've Read This Story! Color Pinup: Arturo Gatti. Interview: Butterbean. Also: Dana Rosenblatt, '92 Olympians, McGuigan-Pedroza.

Nov. 1996 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Roy Jones, Roberto Duran, Joe Cortez.

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Winter 1996: This Is War! Holyfield-Tyson Will Be Explosive ... And Short. Color Pinup: Roy Jones. Interview: Bernard Hopkins. Also: Riddick Bowe, David Reid, Holyfield-Qawi.

Jan. 1997 (Special 88-Page Edition): Bowe-Golota II: Hatred And Vengeance ... It's A Beautiful Thing! Color Pinup: Johnny Tapia. Interview: Lou Duva. Also: Mouse Strauss, heavyweight rematches, Azumah Nelson.

Feb. 1997: *KO's* 1997 Wish List. Color Pinup: Ike Quartey. Interview: Naseem Hamed. Also: David Tua, Felix Trinidad, Adolpho Washington, Bobby Czyz.

Aug. 1997: Oscar Reaches ... But Can't Grasp The Stars. Color Pinup: Nate Miller. Interview: Hector Camacho. Also: Norris-Trinidad preview, Hall of Fame, Angel Manfredy.

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Holiday 1997 (Special 88-Page Edition): Holyfield-Moorer II: Can Evander Avenge His Ugliest Defeat? Color Pinup: Vince Phillips. Interview: Mills Lane. Also: Roy

Jones, Baby Jake Matlala, Boxing 2000.

Jan. 1998: De La Hoya Humbles The Macho Man: "Oscar's The Best I've Ever Fought." Color Pinup: William Guthrie. Interview: Mark Johnson. Also: Johnny Tapia, Pinklon Thomas, defense.

Feb. 1998: Is Lennox Lewis The World's Best Heavyweight? Color Pinup: Charles Brewer. Interview: Marc Ratner. Also: Otis Grant, Arturo Gatti.

March 1998: Evander Holyfield: For The Real Deal, Lewis Is No Big Deal. Color Pinup: Lou Del Valle. Interview: Lennox Lewis. Also: David Izon, Meldrick Taylor, rapid weight loss.

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Sept. 1998: Can Mike Tyson Make A Successful Comeback? Sugar Ray Leonard Has The Answer. Color Pinup: Michael Grant. Interview: Brad Jacobs. Also: Naseem Hamed, Wayne McCullough, Kirk Johnson.

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Sept. 2000: Now Vargas Is Ready For Trinidad & De La Hoya. Color Pinup: Erik Morales. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Trinidad vs. all-time greats, Thomas Hearns, common sense vs. cowardice.

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Feb. 2002: Bernard Hopkins: "I Am The American Dream. I Am The American Story." Interview: Wladimir Klitschko. Also: Omar Sheika, Vernon Forrest, Juan Lazcano.

April 2002: After Hitting Rock Bottom ... Lennox Is Back On The Path To Greatness. Interview: Duva Boxing. Also: Zab Judah, Mike Tyson, Thomas Tate.

June 2002: Tyson vs. Lewis: 10-Page Preview & Analysis. Interview: Jameel McCline. Also: *Ali* movie, Dorin vs. Balbi & Ward vs. Leija.

Aug. 2002: Still Crazy After All These Years: Should Mike Tyson Be Allowed To Fight? Interview: Kostya Tszyu. Also: Barrera-Morales II preview, Ayala-Adams, Ricky Hatton.

Oct. 2002: Vernon Forrest vs. Shane Mosley: Two Careers On The Line! Interview: Fernando Vargas. Also: Mayweather-Castillo, Hopkins vs. all-time greats, heavyweight scrap heap.

Dec. 2002: Wladimir Klitschko: Would He Be Too Much For Lennox? Interview: Joe Calzaghe. Also: Barrera-Morales II, Evander Holyfield, Freddie Roach.

Winter 2002: A Realistic Look At Tyson's Comeback: He Can't Make History, But He Can Make Millions. Interview: Micky Ward. Also: Antonio Tarver, Antwun Echols, Acelino Freitas.

March 2003: Oscar De La Hoya—The War That Rages Within. Interview: Klitschko brothers. Also: Kassim Ouma, Eric Morel, holiday gifts.

May 2003: Danger Zone! Will Roy Jones Be Doomed By His Heavyweight Ego? Interview: Buddy McGirt. Also: Gatti-Ward II, Floyd Mayweather, Erik Morales.

July 2003: Boxing's Biggest X-Factor: Can Hopkins Recover From His Self-Inflicted Wounds? Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Kostya Tszyu, DaVarryl Williamson, 10 best defensive fighters.

Sept. 2003: Sugar Roy? How Jones Rates With The All-Time Greats. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Corrie Sanders, Jean-Marc Mormeck, Kermit Cintron.

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Winter 2003: *KO* Interview Arturo Gatti: "Kostya Tszyu Needs Me More Than I Need Him." Also: Mayorga-Forrest II, Zab Judah, Corrales-Casamayor preview, Joe Calzaghe.

Feb. 2004: Shane Mosley: A Second Chance At Superstardom. Interview: Bernard Hopkins. Also: Laila Ali, Scott LeDoux, retirement.

April 2004: Human After All: Tarver Makes Jones Turn To Tyson. Interview: Emanuel Steward. Also: Sharmba Mitchell, Toney-McCline preview, trash-talking.

June 2004: What Could Tyson Do To Jones? Interview: Antonio Tarver. Also: Bernard Hopkins, Spinks-Mayorga.

Oct. 2004: Dr. Klitschko: The Perfect Band-Aid For The Heavyweight Division. Interview: Diego Corrales. Also: Monte Barrett, Cory Spinks, Vinny Paz & Sven Ottke.

Feb. 2005: Exclusive KO Interview—Manny Pacquiao. Also: Kostya Tszyu, Manning Galloway, quitting, perfect heavyweight.

June 2005: Heavyweight Champ Vitali Klitschko: He's A Lot Better Than You Think! Interview: John Ruiz & Norman Stone. Also: Glen Johnson, 2004 in review.

❑ JUN/83	❑ AUG/88	❑ JUN/92	❑ DEC/98	❑ JUN/01
❑ AUG/83	❑ SEP/88	❑ JUL/92	❑ HOL/98	❑ AUG/01
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❑ JUL/84	❑ DEC/88	❑ SEP/92	❑ FEB/99	❑ DEC/01
❑ AUG/84	❑ JAN/89	❑ OCT/92	❑ MAR/99	❑ FEB/02
❑ OCT/84	❑ AUG/89	❑ NOV/92	❑ MAY/99	❑ APR/02
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RANKING THE BEST FIGHTERS IN THE WORLD

By Eric Raskin

If you've ever wondered how much difference a year makes, you need look no further than THE RING'S annual ranking of the top 100 fighters in the world. One glance at this list and you'll see that a year makes a helluva difference. Every single fighter ranked in the top 10 a year ago is ranked in a different spot today. Last year's number one is this year's number 10. The man who last year came in 50th, this year comes in seventh. The man who last year showed the spirit of 76, this year showed enough spirit to climb 67 spots to number nine. And for the third time in three years, there's a different fighter ranked number one.

The face of the fight game is constantly changing. Every year, some of the old guard shows its age, while some of the new guard takes the stage. Longtime standard bearers Roy Jones, Oscar De La Hoya, and Bernard Hopkins rode chutes. Twentysomethings Ricky Hatton, Jermain Taylor, and Zab Judah climbed ladders. In fact, no fighter ended up in the exact same spot he held 12 months ago.

And 23 fighters who weren't on the list at all last year are now among the elite—which of course means that we've said goodbye to 23 fighters who did make roll call last year. Some were kayoed (like last year's number 35, Mark Johnson), some retired (like number 52, Johnny Bredahl), and some were kayoed and retired (like number 68, Dariusz Michalczewski). "The Polish Tiger" wasn't the only "RING 100" stalwart who stalled out; for the first time since we began ranking the top 100 fighters in 1996, Stevie Johnston's name doesn't appear here.

This is our 10th year of doing this, and it hasn't gotten any easier over time. It's still a painstaking procedure, full of opinions. How does one determine in which order flyweight Rosendo Alvarez and heavyweight Vitali Klitschko should fall, when all they have in common is their low activity levels? How does one decide where to rank peculiar cases like Carlos Maussa or Vernon Forrest?

And why are some fighters ranked higher than others in their weight classes on pages 14 and 15 of this magazine, but lower than those same fighters here? That comes down to the fact that pound-for-pound is based on slightly different criteria. It's not all about results in a given weight division; in the P-4-P, results in other weight divisions count for something, and so do speculation and hunches about just how good each fighter really is.

Are you going to agree exactly with all 100 decisions we made? Probably not; if you did, that would be more than a little bit scary. But, taking into account all results up through our July 28 press deadline, we made the most informed, fair decisions we could. A lot has changed in a year, but THE RING'S dedication to this daunting task of ranking the 100 finest fighters alive has not changed at all.

Mayweather slams a wide-open Gatti

1 FLOYD **MAYWEATHER**
WBC Super Lightweight Titleholder 34-0 (23)

Last Year's Ranking: 2
Status Report: Thought by many to be the most talented fighter in the world for the last several years, finally ascended to the top spot through a combination of his own accomplishment and a stumble by previous RING 100 leader Bernard Hopkins. "Pretty Boy" continued to ease into the 140-pound division with a win over limited Henry Bruseles (KO 8) in January, and then destroyed Arturo Gatti (KO 6) in June in his first pay-per-view headliner. Generally does his best work in his biggest fights.
Future: Has a November 12 date, but no opponent yet. A step up to welterweight is being considered, and he even called out Winky Wright (talk about a pound-for-pound showdown), but negotiations led nowhere.

2 WINKY **WRIGHT** World Junior Middleweight Champion 49-3 (25)

Last Year's Ranking: 5
Status Report: He may not provide many thrills, but you can't deny the Winkster's skills, which he used to repeat his win over Shane Mosley (W 12) last November and then force Felix Trinidad (W 12) into retirement in May. St. Petersburg southpaw hasn't lost a fight in 5½ years, and hasn't lost a controversy-free fight in more than a decade.
Future: Now a top middleweight contender as well as the 154-pound champ, he has to decide which division he wants to focus on. Supposedly, he's on Oscar De La Hoya's short list.

3 MARCO ANTONIO **BARRERA** WBC Super Featherweight Titleholder 60-4 (42)

Last Year's Ranking: 15
Status Report: Most of us figured after November '03 thrashing at the hands of Manny Pacquiao that the Mexican's P-4-P rating was only going to keep moving downward. Instead, he upset Erik Morales (W 12) in their Fight of the Year rubber match and climbed up 12 spots. Followup win over Mzonke Fana (KO 2) meant virtually nothing, though it was one of the more sensational knockouts that Barrera has scored in recent years.
Future: September defense against Robbie Peden is marginally better than Fana mismatch, but still shouldn't be on PPV. Pacquiao II or Morales IV would make us a lot happier.

4 ERIC **MORALES**
Junior Lightweight 48-2 (34)

Last Year's Ranking: 6
Status Report: One loss, one win, two great fights, and no soft touches since last year for "El Terrible." Came out flat in third fight with arch-rival Barrera and fell just short with his late rally, but performed better against Manny Pacquiao in March, winning a close but decisive unanimous decision.
Future: Sharing a bill with Pacquiao in September (facing slick but light-hitting Zahir Raheem) to build toward a re-match in December.

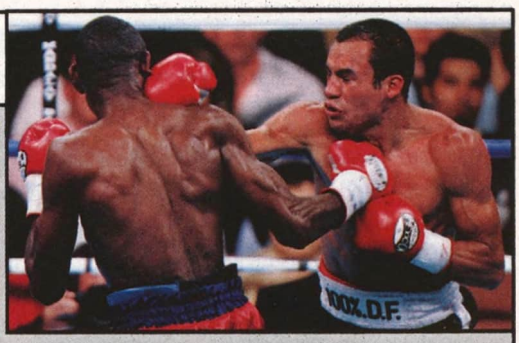
Morales' long jab finds Pacquiao's nose

5 MANNY **PACQUIAO** Junior Lightweight 39-3-2 (30)

Last Year's Ranking: 7
Status Report: Hardly lost any luster despite defeat against Morales, since he was the smaller man moving up. Kept the fight close and showed heart. Shortly thereafter, made two classy moves: vacated RING featherweight title to campaign at 130 full-time, and severed ties with promoter Murad Muhammad.
Future: In line for another crack at Morales, provided he wins against little-known Hector Velasquez in September.

6 JUAN MANUEL **MARQUEZ**
WBA/IBF Featherweight Titleholder 44-2-1 (33)

Last Year's Ranking: 8
Status Report: You know the saying, "You snooze, you lose"? Well, you make us snooze, you lose out on the big-money fights. Supremely skillful Mexican won dull decisions over Orlando Salido and Victor Polo in the past 12 months, while overpricing himself and missing out on a rematch with Manny Pacquiao. All the same, he's still one of the most technically proficient fighters in the game.
Future: Since he doesn't seem to be getting Barrera, Morales, or Pacquiao, a Showtime bout with Scott Harrison is being discussed.



Marquez trades with Polo

7 RICKY **HATTON** World Junior Welterweight Champion 39-0 (29)

Last Year's Ranking: 50
Status Report: We guess he wasn't just an overhyped product of careful matchmaking after all. Shocked the boxing world in June by smothering Kostya Tszyu (KO 11) and convincing him to surrender, claiming the 140-pound championship. Prior to that, looked darned good blowing out Michael Stewart (KO 5) and Ray Oliveira (KO 9).
Future: First defense will probably come on October 1, in front of a massive crowd in England. Wants to perform for American audiences at some point, but financially, it makes more sense to let challengers come to him.

8 DIEGO **CORRALES**
World Lightweight Champion 40-2 (33)

Last Year's Ranking: 16
Status Report: It's not often that your RING 100 ranking soars by fighting just once in the last 12 months, but when that one fight turns out to be one of the greatest fights in history, and you emerge with a RING title and a win over a universally respected foe, a lack of activity doesn't matter so much. Corrales' up-from-the-floor-twice 10th-round kayo of Jose Luis Castillo will never be forgotten by anyone who saw it.
Future: Cancel whatever plans you had for October 8. That's when "Chico" will be making his first defense—a rematch with Castillo.

Corrales gets the best of exchange with Castillo

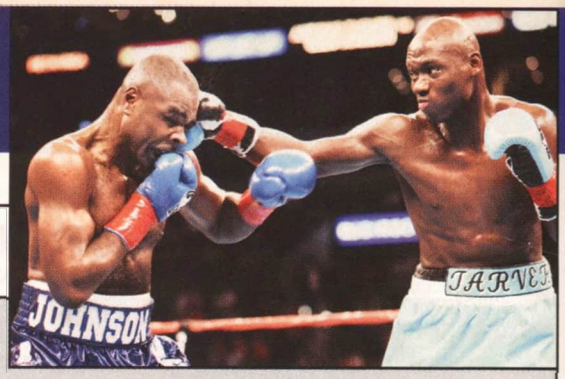
9 JERMAIN **TAYLOR** World Middleweight Champion 24-0 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: 76
Status Report: A tricky guy to rank, since he defeated our previous number-one guy, but did so via controversial decision and has no other elite-level track record to speak of. Still, nobody else has even given Bernard Hopkins a close fight in years, so the 2000 Olympian's split decision win gets him into the top 10. Also scored dominant wins over William Joppy (W 12) and Daniel Edouard (KO 3) in the last 12 months.
Future: If he wants to make a run at Hopkins' former status as RING 100 king, he'll need to prevail more decisively in the rematch.

10 BERNARD **HOPKINS** Middleweight 46-3-1 (32) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 1
Status Report: An amazing year by any 40-year-old athlete's standards, but by "The Executioner's" standards, he definitely showed signs of slowing down. Got off to a slow start before starching Oscar De La Hoya (KO 9) with a single bodyshot, used guile to defeat Howard Eastman (W 12) in a tepid performance, and started slow again en route to dropping the undisputed middleweight title to Jermain Taylor on a controversial decision, ending a historic, decade-long reign.
Future: A rematch with Taylor late in the year, and win or lose, retirement in 2006 and Canastota five years later.

11 ANTONIO **TARVER**
World Light Heavyweight Champion 23-3 (18)



A Tarver right lands on Johnson's temple

Last Year's Ranking: 3
Status Report: Two past tendencies held up for "The Magic Man" over the last year: He doesn't do well with judges in close fights, and he does extremely well in rematches. Lost a disputed decision to Glen Johnson last December in an excellent 12-round scrap, then got himself in better shape for the June rematch and won a hard-earned points nod.
Future: We guess he won't be getting Bernard Hopkins in the fall after all. A rubber match with Roy Jones is instead reportedly in the works.

12 ZAB **JUDAH** World Welterweight Champion 34-2 (25) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 36
Status Report: Finally growing up and living up to his potential at age 27. Knocked out Cory Spinks (KO 9) in St. Louis in February to claim 147-pound RING title, and sandwiched that with near-flawless blowouts of Wayne Martell (KO 1) and Cosme Rivera (KO 3).
Future: September defense against Sharmba Mitchell fell apart, leaving the welterweight champ without a fight as this issue went to press. Attractive matches with Shane Mosley or Floyd Mayweather possible.

13 JOSE LUIS **CASTILLO** Lightweight 52-7-1 (46)

Last Year's Ranking: 12
Status Report: Made no advance in the RING 100 since last year, but made a giant leap in terms of name recognition and respect. Turned away Joel Casamayor (W 12) in a close fight in December '04, bludgeoned Julio Diaz (KO 10) in March '05, and fell about one punch short in a modern classic against Diego Corrales (KO by 10) in May. It's hard to do much better in defeat that Castillo did in losing to Corrales.
Future: Gets a chance to even the score against Corrales October 8 on PPV.

14 RAFAEL **MARQUEZ**
IBF Bantamweight Titleholder 34-3 (30)

Marquez connects en route to kayo of Pastrana

Last Year's Ranking: 13
Status Report: Survived a scary moment or two last November to become the first to stop Mauricio Pastrana (KO 8), then boxed his way to victory over top-10 rated Ricardo Vargas (W 12) in May. Not the most productive year for the world's best (and hardest-hitting) bantamweight, but at least he kept winning.
Future: Nothing scheduled as of press time, but talk persists of a move to junior feather. If he stays at bantam, a decent mandatory against Silence Mabuza looms.

15 GLEN **JOHNSON** Light Heavyweight 42-10-2 (28)

Last Year's Ranking: 51
Status Report: One of the most unlikely Fighter of the Year winners in history, he demolished Roy Jones (KO 9) in September '04, then upset Antonio Tarver via split decision in December to claim the 175-pound world title. It hasn't been quite as smooth sailing in '05, as "The Road Warrior" lost the championship back to Tarver (L 12) in June, but it was another close fight that proved Johnson is no journeyman.
Future: Most fans would like to see a rubber match with Tarver, but that's the new champ's call, and the new champ is apparently focusing on Jones first.

16 KOSTYA **TSZYU** Junior Welterweight 31-2 (25) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 10
Status Report: It's been an interesting 12 months for the pony-tailed veteran, as he experienced arguably his greatest win and his worst defeat in consecutive fights. Three-round blowout of top contender Sharmba Mitchell last November was a fantastic way to end a 22-month layoff, but then came surrender on his stool prior to the 12th round against Ricky Hatton in June, a finish nobody predicted.
Future: Anything from retirement to a rematch with Hatton seems possible. Russian-Australian had better make sure his heart is in it if he decides to give it another go, however.

17 SHANE **MOSLEY** Welterweight 40-4 (35) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 21
Status Report: Made small strides since last year's Ring 100. Did better than the first time around in rematch with Winky Wright, losing a perfectly respectable, narrow decision, then returned to welterweight and outpointed David Estrada, scoring his first decisive win in almost four years. Undoubtedly past his very best, but not nearly as far gone as some thought he was following first loss to Wright.
Future: Returning on September 17, against undefeated but anonymous Jose Luis Cruz. Matches down the road with Zab Judah or Antonio Margarito would be intriguing.

Mosley rocks Estrada with a right

18 OSCAR **DE LA HOYA** Middleweight 37-4 (29)

Last Year's Ranking: 9
Status Report: "The Golden Boy" is hitting a new career low in The Ring 100, which is only natural when he hasn't fought since September '04 and won't fight again until 2006. As far as his abilities, however, he is still among the 10 or 20 best in the sport, as evidenced by his decent showing against Bernard Hopkins (KO by 9) at a weight that is clearly far above where the four-division former titlist should be fighting.
Future: It seems to us like he's more into promoting than fighting these days, but he claims he wants to return in '06 against Fernando Vargas, the re-retired Felix Trinidad, or Winky Wright.

19 OSCAR **LARIOS** WBC Super Bantamweight Titleholder 56-3-1 (36)

Last Year's Ranking: 32
Status Report: Another busy year, as the windmill-like "Chololo" added three more title defenses and one non-title win. Struggled somewhat with Wayne McCullough (W 12) in February, but established clear superiority in July rematch, becoming the first to stop the Irish veteran (KO 10). Previously, in late-'04, won a tuneup against Ivan Alvarez (W 10) and overwhelmed Nedal Hussein (W 12) with his workrate.
Future: A rubber match with Israel Vazquez is still the most logical fight, but we wouldn't say no to a showdown with bantam boss Rafael Marquez.

Larios' jab keeps McCullough at bay

20 JOEL **CASAMAYOR** Lightweight 31-3-1 (19)

Last Year's Ranking: 23
Status Report: The Cuban who now goes by the nickname "Unbreakable" can't quite break through these days against the top guys, but he's continuing to give everyone difficult, close fights. He lost a narrow decision to then-lightweight champ Jose Luis Castillo last December, and came away with a draw in June against unbeaten prospect Almazbek Raiymkulov. On TV, most thought Raiymkulov won; in press row, most sided with Casamayor.
Future: A rematch with Raiymkulov makes sense, though Casamayor would surely prefer a rubber match with Diego Corrales.

21 ANTONIO **MARGARITO**
Welterweight 32-4 (23) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 37
Status Report: "Tono" had an outstanding year as a welterweight, though a somewhat spotty one as a junior middle. He moved up last September to face Daniel Santos and lost a controversial split technical decision after nine rounds, but scored two big wins back at 147 pounds, abusing Sebastian Lujan's ear (KO 10) and then abusing Kermit Cintron's career (KO 5).
Future: Reportedly set to fight on Showtime's October 1 card, though probably not against a top-tier opponent.

Margarito sneaks in a short left against Cintron

22 PONGSAKLEK **WONJONGKAM** WBC Flyweight Titleholder 56-2 (31)

Last Year's Ranking: 28
Status Report: Another busy year for the number-one fighter at 112 pounds, who has now made 11 defenses in his four-plus years with the belt. Won three non-title fights in the past 12 months, and scored a fifth-round kayo of Noriyuki Komatsu in January in defense of the WBC strap. Dominated Komatsu, winning every round and scoring three knockdowns.
Future: Fight in America with Jorge Arce keeps falling apart, but hopefully the potential thriller can still be put back together.

23 MIGUEL **COTTO**
Junior Welterweight 24-0 (20)

Last Year's Ranking: 42
Status Report: Chinks appeared in the Puerto Rican mega-prospect's armor, but it was still an upwardly mobile year for him. Looked great blasting out Kelson Pinto (KO 6) and Randall Bailey (KO 6), but then got rocked badly by DeMarcus Corley, raising plenty of questions despite rallying to halt "Chop Chop" in the fifth. Bounced back with a satisfying win over Olympic conqueror Muhammed Abdullaev (KO 9) in Madison Square Garden debut.
Future: Taking on the respectable but not too threatening Gianluca Branco in September. Expect him to handle Branco much more easily than Arturo Gatti did.

Hopefully, Corley didn't wager on himself against Cotto

24 MARTIN **CASTILLO** WBA Super Flyweight Titleholder 29-1 (16)

Last Year's Ranking: 77
Status Report: Highly skilled Mexican finally broke through with a trio of decision wins, dominating previously unbeaten Alexander Munoz to claim an alphabet belt, pitching a near-shutout against Eric Morel, and scoring a decisive win over Hideyasu Ishihara. Basically still an undefeated fighter at age 28, as his only loss was a bogus technical decision against Felix Machado in '02.
Future: A showdown with Fernando Montiel has been mentioned, and would be a doozy of a technical boxing match between talented young fighters.

25 CORY **SPINKS** Welterweight 34-3 (11)

Last Year's Ranking: 17
Status Report: The good news for "The Next Generation" is that his defensive style doesn't prevent him from drawing extremely well in St. Louis; the bad news is that he's no longer the welterweight champ. Zab Judah stopped him in nine rounds in front of a massive pro-Spinks crowd at the Savvis Center to end his reign. Previously, Spinks won a meaningless decision against used-up Miguel Angel Gonzalez.
Future: Looking to make his 154-pound debut in the fall, but it doesn't seem it will be against Daniel Santos, as originally expected.

26 ROSENDO **ALVAREZ** Flyweight 34-2-2 (22)

Last Year's Ranking: 24
Status Report: Inactivity continues to plague Ricardo Lopez' most famous rival. Forfeited his 108-pound title on the scales last October prior to winning a split decision over Beibis Mendoza, and won a meaningless bout in Nicaragua against totally unknown Regulo Gamez (KO 7). Sadly, this was twice as many fights as he engaged in the year before.
Future: We'd like to see what impact he can have at 112 pounds, but who knows if Don King will secure him a significant bout.

27 VITALI **KLITSCHKO** World Heavyweight Champion 35-2 (34)

Last Year's Ranking: 26
Status Report: It hasn't been a great year for the top heavyweight, as he notched only one defense—against fringe contender Danny Williams—suffered a couple of training injuries while preparing to fight Hasim Rahman, and sure looked like he was ducking Rahman when he started looking for other opponents for the fall. At least he fought well in dominating Williams (KO 8) last December.
Future: Has agreed in principle to fight the Rahman-Monte Barrett winner, but has also talked about fighting Calvin Brock instead.

Klitschko has been inactive since Williams kayo

28 LORENZO **PARRA** WBA Flyweight Titleholder 25-0 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: 29
Status Report: Essentially a marking-time year for the tiny Venezuelan, who hasn't done anything of note since dethroning Eric Morel in 2003. Notched two fairly close decision victories, over ex-junior fly titleholder Yosam Choi and decent Masaki "Trash" Nakanuma.
Future: Slated for a tough December defense in Paris against Frenchman and 2000 Olympic gold medalist Brahim Asloum. Looks like a tossup on paper, though Parra has the edge in big-fight experience.

29 JOE **CALZAGHE** Super Middleweight 39-0 (31)

Last Year's Ranking: 27
Status Report: Is there a more depressingly untested competitor in the sport than the Welsh veteran? Further padded his record with off-the-floor win over Kabary Salem (W 12) and a one-sided kayo of Mario Veit (KO 6). The latter result suggests that the 33-year-old is headed in the wrong direction, as he needed only one round to victimize Veit in '01.
Future: Finally, a major fight: Will almost certainly meet Jeff Lacy in December, provided Lacy has gotten past Robin Reid by the time you read this. Calzaghe's legacy will be on the line.

30 CHRIS **BYRD** IBF Heavyweight Titleholder 38-2-1 (20)

Last Year's Ranking: 34
Status Report: Not the year that the southpaw cutie was hoping for, as his ongoing struggle to land major fights continued. Only fought once, rallying from a second-round knockdown to outlast exhausted Jameel McCline (W 12).
Future: While the IBF sorted out a ridiculous dilemma over which unworthy challenger—DaVarryl Williamson or Wladimir Klitschko—gets the next shot, Byrd continued to twiddle his thumbs. The IBF chose Williamson, meaning Byrd will have to waste his time with that fight sometime soon if he wants to keep his belt.

Byrd scores an off-the-canvas win over McCline

31 JAMES **TONEY** Heavyweight 68-4-2 (43) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 11
Status Report: Since he's clearly not going to be fighting at cruiserweight anymore, we've decided starting this year to judge "Lights Out" purely as a heavyweight, thus explaining his tumble in the rankings. It just isn't right to rank him above Vitali Klitschko and Chris Byrd if he's a full-time heavyweight like they are. Had a fair year in the ring—outpointing Rydell Booker and John Ruiz—but had the Ruiz result changed to a no-contest when he failed a drug test.
Future: Injury prone, not always in shape, and unable to follow up major wins, he seems destined not to live up to his potential as a heavyweight.

32 JESUS **CHAVEZ** Junior Lightweight 41-3 (28)

Last Year's Ranking: 39
Status Report: After giving Erik Morales hell last year, returned from a 15-month injury-induced layoff to outpoint tough Carlos Hernandez in a bout that could've gone either way. Always keeps up an impressive pace, and never seems to under-perform.
Future: Reportedly turned down a $500,000 offer for an October rematch with Hernandez. Looking like he'll be moving up to lightweight to try to snag a belt from Leavander Johnson instead.

33 JORGE **ARCE** Flyweight 39-3-1 (29)

Last Year's Ranking: 38
Status Report: Recorded two defenses of the WBC 108-pound title (W 12 Juanito Rubillar, KO 3 Juan Centeno) to bring his total to seven, then made long overdue move up to flyweight, where he debuted with a rousing victory over world-rated Hussein Hussein (KO 10). Also became a huge reality-TV star in Mexico by starring on the South of the Border version of *Big Brother*.
Future: Ridiculously oversized fly is headed for October 8 rematch with Hussein, where his superior strength and bulk again make him the favorite.

Moving up, Arce gets a big win over Hussein

34 ROMAN **KARMAZIN** IBF Junior Middleweight Titleholder 34-1-1 (21) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Scored perhaps the biggest upset of '05 when he confounded Kassim Ouma in July with his awkward, long-armed style, dropped him twice, and won a wide unanimous decision. Earned that alphabet title shot with a close points win over former middleweight beltholder Keith Holmes in April.
Future: Considering that Ouma was said to be battling pneumonia leading up to the fight, this one has rematch written all over it.

35 KASSIM **OUMA** Junior Middleweight 21-2-1 (13) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 30
Status Report: Two major wins, one devastating loss since last year's "100." Moved himself to the brink of boxing superstardom by outpointing Verno Phillips for his first alphabet title and then Kofi Jantuah in his HBO debut, but it all came crashing down when "The Dream" was dashed by Roman Karmazin in what was thought to be a keep-busy fight.
Future: We guess that shot at Winky Wright is off the table for now. But it might be back on the table if he secures a rematch with Karmazin and figures out the Russian's tricky style.

Phillips takes the fight to Ouma

36 JEAN-MARC **MORMECK**
World Cruiserweight Champion 31-2 (21)

Last Year's Ranking: 71
Status Report: Did something nobody's done since Evander Holyfield: unified two cruiserweight belts, and earned universally recognized supremacy as a result. Scored a knockdown en route to comprehensively outpointing fellow beltholder Wayne Braithwaite in April, becoming the first cruiserweight *champion* since THE RING instituted its current championship policy four years ago.
Future: Desperately needs to get busier (only four defenses in three-plus years as a titlist). May face trinketholder O'Neil Bell next, completing the cruiserweight unification.

Mormeck pummels Braithwaite on the ropes

37 RICARDO **MAYORGA** Junior Middleweight 26-5-1 (22) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 19
Status Report: On top of the world just two years ago, the wacky Nicaraguan continues to tumble. Made the unwise decision of trying to leap up to middleweight, and took a beating from Felix Trinidad (KO by 8) in a thrilling but one-sided fight. Retired and then unretired, but hadn't fought yet through the first seven months of 2005.
Future: Will have faced Michele Piccirillo at 154 pounds (assuming the undisciplined former welter champ made weight) by the time you read this.

38 INJIN **CHI** WBC Featherweight Titleholder 30-2-1 (18)

Last Year's Ranking: 61
Status Report: Fearsome Korean made second successful defense of alphabet title, easily handling Australian Tommy Browne (W 12) in January. That was his only fight since last year, but the apparent inactivity is misleading; he fought last July just before the 2004 RING 100, and was scheduled to fight in August just after this year's press deadline, giving him three bouts in 13 months.
Future: August fight with U.S. Olympian Rocky Juarez fell apart when South Korean ruptured his Achilles tendon training for the bout.

39 MIKKEL **KESSLER**
WBA Super Middleweight Titleholder 36-0 (27)

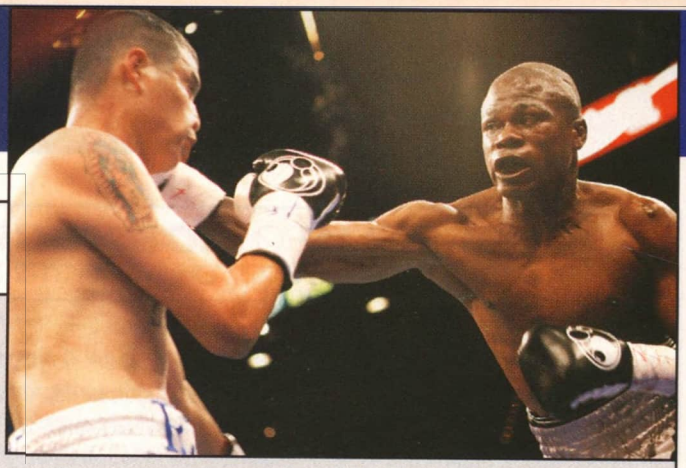
Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Previously anonymous Dane burst onto the world scene with comprehensive wins over two of the most respected 168-pounders, obliterating Manny Siaca (KO 8) last November and beating Aussie Anthony Mundine (W 12) in Sydney in June. "The Viking Warrior" has heavy hands, a good chin, and impressive skills. In other words, if he has major flaws, we haven't seen them yet.
Future: Will probably have to mark time for the rest of the year, since Joe Calzaghe and Jeff Lacy are planning on being otherwise occupied. Mandatory challenger is Mads Larsen.

Undefeated Kessler outworks Mundine

40 IKE **QUARTEY** Junior Middleweight 36-2-1 (30)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Pulled a poor man's George Foreman by ending a five-year retirement at age 35 and scoring two victories: a meaningless win over one Clint McNeil (KO 8) and a meaningful but disputed win over world-class vet Verno Phillips (W 10). May not be the pound-for-pound top-10-ish force he was in the late-'90s, but still did exceptionally well against Phillips given the expected rust factor.
Future: Is it too late to finally resolve the controversy with Oscar De La Hoya? Also seems like a marketable opponent for Winky Wright, even if that wouldn't be the African's wisest move.

41 VERNON **FORREST**
Junior Middleweight 36-2 (27)



Forrest easily disposes of Rios

Last Year's Ranking: 20
Status Report: Nobody really has any clue how much the former 147-pound champ has left, but he's an active fighter again, and that's good enough to keep a guy with his credentials in the top 50. Returned from three surgeries on his left arm to defeat hapless Sergio Rios (KO 2) in July, scoring his first win in nearly three years.
Future: Wants to take it slow and fight a few more patsies before testing himself, which seems like a fair approach to us. If he regains full health, could be a major factor at 154.

42 ACELINO **FREITAS** Lightweight 37-1 (32)

Last Year's Ranking: 25
Status Report: Easing his way back since quit job against Diego Corrales with victories over non-entities Fernando Saucedo (W 10) and Fabian Salazar (KO 1) in Brazil. Hard to tell against opposition like that whether gifted kayo artist really has his heart in the sport completely.
Future: There's talk of a meeting with volume puncher Juan Diaz for a lightweight belt later this year, an intriguing clash of styles.

43 HOZUMI **HASEGAWA**
WBC Bantamweight Titleholder 18-2 (5)

Sahaprom stumbles from a Hasegawa left to the belly

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Came from virtually out of nowhere (only previous claim to fame was holding the Orient-Pacific bantamweight belt) to end the six-year alphabet title reign of Veerapol Sahaprom via narrow unanimous decision in April. Not a big hitter by any means, but a clever boxer.
Future: Headed for a rematch with Veerapol, probably before the end of the year.

44 VEERAPOL **SAHAPROM** Bantamweight 48-2-2 (34)

Last Year's Ranking: 14
Status Report: Seemed to be rolling along with his 14th title defense (W 12 Cecilio Santos) and two easy non-title kayos, when his outstanding reign came to a sudden end against Hozumi Hasegawa (L 12) in Japan. Had shown vulnerability in recent years, and at age 36, he finally let the title slip away. Bounced back two months later, however, to win a tuneup fight against journeyman Noel Sungahid (KO 5).
Future: Will need to turn back the clock a little bit to even the score in rematch with Hasegawa.

45 MAHYAR **MONSHIPOUR** WBA Super Bantamweight Titleholder 28-2-2 (19)

Last Year's Ranking: 83
Status Report: Extended six-fight knockout string to nine with three more impressive kayos in defense of belt. Took out former beltholder Yoddamrong Sithyodthong (KO 6) with surprising ease, whipped undeserving Shigeru Nakazato (KO 6) with unsurprising ease, and convinced decent Julio Zarate to stay on his stool at the end of the eighth round. Gradually becoming one of the most popular fighters France has seen in a long while.
Future: Mandatory Somsak Sithchatchawal has a glittering record built against nobodies, which should spell another knockout defense for Monshipour.

46 VERNO **PHILLIPS** Junior Middleweight 38-10-1 (20) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 31
Status Report: Went 0-2 since last year, but if there's such a thing as a respectable 0-2 year, then that's what the 35-year-old veteran had. Lost his alphabet belt to Kassim Ouma via competitive unanimous decision last October, then lost a 10-round decision to comebacking Ike Quartey in a bout that could easily have been scored the other way. Phillips floored Quartey in round nine, but couldn't quite finish him and lost by a single point.
Future: His 2002-'04 hot streak is clearly over, but he'll still give problems to anyone at 154.

47 SHARMBA **MITCHELL** Welterweight 56-4 (30)

Last Year's Ranking: 18
Status Report: "The Little Big Man" came up extremely little in rematch with then-140-pound champ Kostya Tszyu last November, getting starched in three rounds in a fight in which the majority of the press had picked the challenger to win. Returned, as a welterweight, with shaky five-round technical decision win over Chris Smith in June.
Future: Even though title shot at welterweight champion Zab Judah has fallen apart, veteran southpaw is still looking to rebuild at 147. But at 35 years of age, time is running out.

48 LUIS **PEREZ** IBF Junior Bantamweight Titleholder 23-1 (15)

Last Year's Ranking: 44
Status Report: It's hard to move up in the RING 100 when you're fighting just once a year, as "El Demoledor" has done in consecutive years now. Only result in past 12 months came off TV against Luis Bolano (KO 6) and didn't accomplish much besides end a 16-month inactive stretch.
Future: A match with Fernando Montiel is reportedly being talked about. Just about any match that's on television would be good for the Nicaraguan's career at this point.

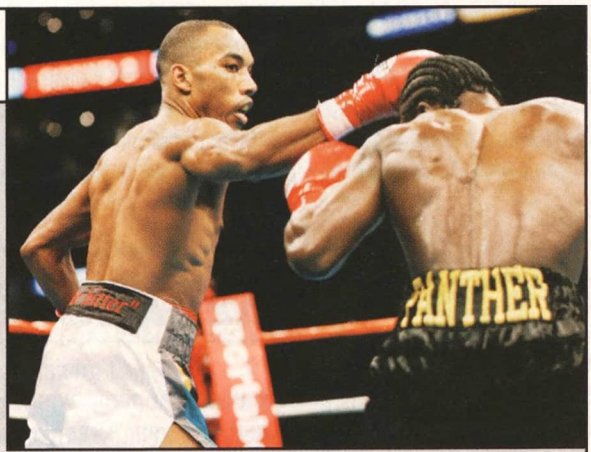
Perez' uppercut finds its way around Bolano's right arm

49 MASAMORI **TOKUYAMA** WBC Super Flyweight Titleholder 31-3-1 (8)

Last Year's Ranking: 55
Status Report: Was his June '04 first-round kayo loss to Katsushige Kawashima a fluke? It sure seems that way in light of Tokuyama's unanimous decision revenge win in July '05, giving him a 2-1 edge in their series and his alphabet belt back.
Future: Will have a tough time putting together a second reign as strong as his first, which lasted four years and eight defenses. In fact, it could end in mandated first defense against talented Jose Navarro.

50 JUNIOR **WITTER** Junior Welterweight 32-1-2 (19)

Last Year's Ranking: 97
Status Report: Gifted Brit came to America for the first time and scored career-best win over Lovemore Ndou (W 12), stymieing the tough South African with his impressive combination of speed and power. That victory was sandwiched between a blowout of Krzysztof Bienias (KO 2) and a tighter-than-expected win over Andreas Kotelnik (W 12).
Future: Now that he's hooked in with Golden Boy Promotions, may get bigger fights and better exposure, but it'll still be tough to convince top guys to take the risk. And that includes countryman and world champion Ricky Hatton.



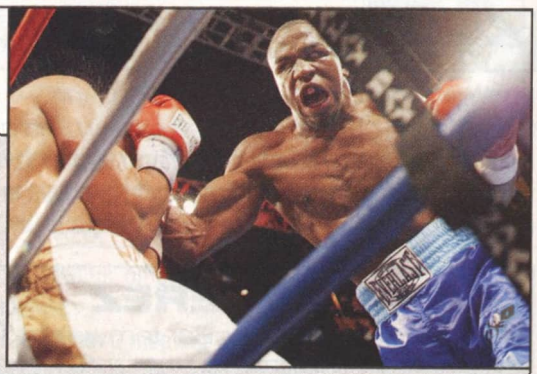
Witter outclasses Ndou in his best showing yet

51 DANIEL **SANTOS** Junior Middleweight 29-2-1 (20) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 91
Status Report: How does your reputation advance when you fight only once, the opponent is naturally smaller than you, and you win by disputed ninth-round technical decision? When the opponent is Antonio Margarito, and he follows up his loss to you with a sensational win of his own, elevating your stock in the process.
Future: Scheduled as of press time to face another smaller fighter, Jose Antonio Rivera. Will need to win more convincingly than he did against Margarito to continue to elevate his stock.

52 JEFF **LACY**
IBF Super Middleweight Titleholder
19-0 (15) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Went straight from prospect to titleholder—skipping over the whole "contender" thing—by downing Syd Vanderpool (KO 8) to claim the vacant IBF strap last October (becoming the first member of the 2000 U.S. Olympic team to claim a title). "Left Hook" quickly registered two defenses, against Omar Sheika (W 12) and Rubin Williams (KO 7), though he didn't look great in either fight.
Future: If he's prevailed in tough fight with Robin Reid by the time this magazine comes out, then it's on to a superfight—at least by current 168-pound standards—against Joe Calzaghe.



Lacy unleashes a barrage against Williams along the ropes

53 CARLOS **HERNANDEZ** Junior Lightweight 41-5-1 (24)

Last Year's Ranking: 90
Status Report: Came out on the right side and the wrong side of two split decisions, showing if nothing else a tendency to fight to the level of his opposition. Needed a late knockdown to pull out a bloody 10-rounder against ordinary Juan Carlos Ramirez, then failed to get the nod in a fight that truly could have gone either way against highly regarded Jesus Chavez. Say this for "Famoso": He's almost never in a bad fight.
Future: Chavez turned down October rematch, leaving El Salvador's favorite fighter with an easier bout against Bobby Pacquiao.

54 FERNANDO **MONTIEL**
Junior Bantamweight 31-1-1 (24)

Last Year's Ranking: 63
Status Report: Redeemed his 2003 upset loss to Mark Johnson with April domination of Ivan Hernandez (KO 7), the man who knocked out Johnson last year. Prior to Hernandez win, graceful boxer-puncher took out Reynaldo Hurtado (KO 7), but after Hernandez win, looked relatively ordinary slipping past late sub Evert Briceno (W 12).
Future: Bout with Luis Perez is a possibility, and would give us a better idea of how far the flashy but inconsistent Mexican can go.

Montiel is taken to the distance by Briceno

55 JUAN **LAZCANO** Lightweight 33-3-1 (25)

Last Year's Ranking: 45
Status Report: This Hispanic caused no panic whatsoever between last year's RING 100 and this year's, as he hasn't fought since his June '04 decision defeat to Jose Luis Castillo for the lightweight title. That was partially because he got banged up pretty good by Castillo, and partially because of promotional problems with Golden Boy.
Future: Those promotional issues have been sorted out, and the entertaining Mexican-American was slated to return in late-summer. We're guessing the rest will do him good.

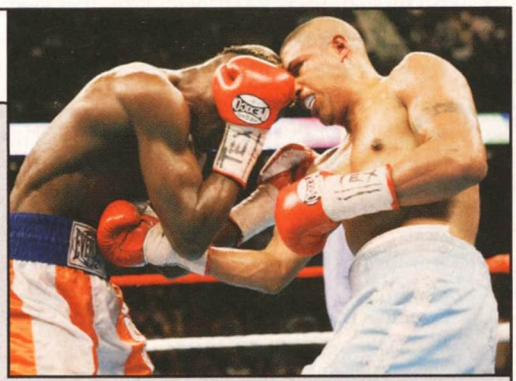
56 KATSUSHIGE **KAWASHIMA**
Junior Bantamweight 28-4 (14)

Last Year's Ranking: 33
Status Report: Has slipped from the lofty perch he was on after shocking long-reigning Masamori Tokuyama in one round last year, losing his alphabet belt (and arguably deserving to lose it twice). After a gimme first defense against Raul "Baby" Juarez (W 12) last September, won a highly unpopular split decision over Jose Navarro in January, then lost the title back to Tokuyama by unanimous decision in July.
Future: May get another crack at the belt, but will have to wait for Tokuyama-Navarro first.

Kawashima's victory over Navarro is still a source of controversy

57 FERNANDO **VARGAS**
Middleweight 25-2 (22)

Last Year's Ranking: 46
Status Report: After a career-long 15-month layoff, looked somewhat rusty but showed improved defense (he credits new trainer Danny Smith) in winning a competitive 10-round unanimous decision over Raymond Joval in March. Weighed career-high 162 pounds for that fight. Says intends to campaign at 154 going forward, but has been a middleweight for his three most recent bouts.
Future: Popular Californian's hopes for another title run depend heavily on the outcome of his August fight with veteran Javier Castillejo. If successful, a rematch with Oscar De La Hoya could be next.


Vargas plants one on Joval's Everlast label

58 VIC **DARCHINYAN** IBF Flyweight Titleholder 23-0 (18)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Was he just in the right place at the right time against an aging, inactive titlist? Perhaps, but win over Irene Pacheco (KO 11) last December still made a strong statement about previously untested Aussie. Followed up with a quality defense at home against respected South African Mzukisi Sikali (KO 8).
Future: Setting a much better standard for activity than Pacheco did, with plans for title defense number two against Jair Jimenez in August.

59 FELIX **STURM** Middleweight 24-1 (11)

Last Year's Ranking: 62
Status Report: Has kept busy since breakout fight against Oscar De La Hoya, fighting every three months, though not against world-beaters. Defeated Robert "Pushup" Frazier (W 12) in September, Hassine Cherifi (KO 3) in December, Bert Schenk (KO 2) in March, and Jorge Sendra (W 12) in June.
Future: A logical challenger for Olympic adversary Jermain Taylor if the new middleweight champ emerges victorious in his rematch with Bernard Hopkins. First, however, will be a bout with Maselino Masoe.

60 ZSOLT **ERDEI** Light Heavyweight 22-0 (13)

Last Year's Ranking: 43
Status Report: Either Hugo Garay is a tough competitor, or the undefeated Germany-based Hungarian isn't as good as he looked upsetting Julio Gonzalez in 2004. One way or another, Garay has given Erdei problems, pushing him to two narrow decisions, the latest a split decision in Germany in February. Before that, took a unanimous decision over mediocre Alejandro Lakatus.
Future: Looks destined for a Sven Ottke-type career of fighting at home, winning questionable decisions, and never testing himself against the very best light heavies in the world. Next up is probably Mehdi Sahnoune.

61 ROY JONES Light Heavyweight 49-3 (38)

Last Year's Ranking: 4
Status Report: A 57-position plunge may seem extreme, but he sure seemed like a fighter with absolutely nothing left to offer in scary loss to Glen Johnson (KO by 9) last September. Can no longer intimidate with his speed, and the extraordinary reflexes that once allowed him to slip nearly every punch have become ordinary.
Future: Though he's been inactive nearly an entire year, says he isn't retiring. In fact, looks on his way to a third fight with Antonio Tarver. We fear for Jones' safety.

62 YUTAKA NIIDA WBA Minimumweight Titleholder 18-1-3 (8)

Last Year's Ranking: 57
Status Report: The world's top 105-pounder had a ho-hum year, chalking up two more defenses in less than stellar fashion. Squeaked by on a split decision by one point last October against Juan Landaeta, then took a more comfortable unanimous decision over relative unknown Jae Won Kim in April.
Future: Landaeta remains his top alphabet contender, and does seem worthy of a rematch.

Niida rattles Kim with a hook to the jaw

63 JUAN DIAZ WBA Lightweight Titleholder 28-0 (14)

Last Year's Ranking: 85
Status Report: "Baby Bull" continued to progress and prove himself, looking sharp in defenses against former beltholder Julien Lorcy (W 12) and faded brawler Billy Irwin (KO 9). A slight step up against Ebo Elder was to follow in April, but the 21-year-old Texan suffered a cut in sparring and had to pull out. Returned with a non-title, tuneup win over Arthur Cruz (KO 5) in July.
Future: The Elder defense hasn't merely been postponed, it's been scrapped—possibly in favor of a bout with Acelino Freitas, a highly intriguing matchup of volume vs. power.

64 ROCKY JUAREZ Featherweight 23-0 (16)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Was all set to enter the top 100 last year, until his ugly struggle against Zahir Raheem convinced us he wasn't ready yet. Well, he looked ready this year. First, destroyed Guty Espadas (KO 2) with a tremendous left hook, then blew out the usually durable Juan Carlos "Ranchero" Ramirez in March, scoring three knockdowns en route to a first-round stoppage
Future: He was ready for the Ring 100, and we were about to find out of he was ready for beltholder InJin Chi, but Chi was forced to withdraw after suffering a ruptured Achilles tendon.

65 SCOTT HARRISON Featherweight 24-2-2 (14)

Last Year's Ranking: 60
Status Report: Lost a little ground despite scoring three defenses of WBO belt, and it becomes clear why when you take a close look at the fights: One-round kayo of neophyte Samuel Kebede last October counted for next to nothing; Scotsman was considered lucky by most to get January draw in Glasgow against Victor Polo; and fourth-round knockout of Michael Brodie in June seemed due in large part to considerable size differential.
Future: Might get Juan Manuel Marquez in the fall, but if he does, we don't love "The Real McCoy's" chances.

Brodie didn't last long after taking Harrison's vicious left

66 ISRAEL **VAZQUEZ** IBF Junior Featherweight Titleholder 38-3 (27)

Last Year's Ranking: 75
Status Report: A mildly productive year for the man best known for his thrilling 2002 loss to Oscar Larios. Got off to a great start with fifth-round stoppage of previously unbeaten ESPN darling Art Simonyan, but struggled in next defense, overcoming a slow start to win a close, debatable decision against lightly regarded Armando Guerrero.
Future: Fight with Johnny Tapia didn't pan out, which is a shame for Vazquez because he would've surely added a big-name scalp. Mandatory challenger Celestino Caballero is no pushover.

67 ALEXANDER **MUNOZ** Junior Bantamweight 27-1 (25)

Last Year's Ranking: 41
Status Report: Wicked punching Venezuelan was exposed to a large degree in suffering first loss, as Martin Castillo outboxed him and knocked him down twice to take WBA title last December. Came back with an easy tuneup win over clubfighter Over Bolanos (KO 2) and a solid victory in an alphabet eliminator against previously unbeaten Julio David Roque Ler (W 12).
Future: Still in the mix at 115, but will need to improve his skills to get past the likes of Castillo, Fernando Montiel, Jose Navarro, etc.

68 CARLOS **MAUSSA** WBA Super Lightweight Titleholder 19-2 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Scored probably the biggest upset of the first half of 2005 when he weathered Vivian Harris' early storm and starched him with a left hook in the seventh round. How big of an underdog was the awkward Colombian? Just six months earlier, he lost a unanimous decision to 19-6-1 Arturo Morua. He wasn't supposed to bother Harris, much less beat him.
Future: Has actually had his name tossed around as a possible opponent for Ricky Hatton.

Maussa (left) stops Harris' momentum with an uppercut

69 ROBERTO **VASQUEZ** WBC Light Flyweight Titleholder 19-1 (16)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: "Spider" began his year by fighting two opponents on complete opposite ends of the spectrum, winning a decision over 18-1 Freddy Beleno, then scoring a first-round knockout over 0-12-1 Farid Cassiani. The win that got him on this list, however, was his April upset victory over veteran Beibis Mendoza (KO 10) that delighted his home crowd in Panama City.
Future: Due for another bout with a veteran ex-titlist—Jose Antonio Aguirre—shortly before this magazine hits the stands.

70 ARTURO **GATTI** Junior Welterweight 39-7 (30)

Last Year's Ranking: 22
Status Report: Just when everything seemed to be clicking for the ultra-popular living legend, he made the mistake of signing on the dotted line to face Floyd Mayweather. "Pretty Boy" dished out a completely one-sided beating, stopping the crowd favorite at the end of the sixth round. Previously, "Thunder" looked sharp stopping James Leija in five.
Future: Retirement wouldn't be the worst move, but the gutsy warrior wants to give it one more go at welterweight (though not until 2006). We can't see him beating any of the top guys at 147, but then again, we've written him off prematurely before.

Gatti had Leija smelling leather

71 JULIO DIAZ Lightweight 31-3 (23)

Last Year's Ranking: 67
Status Report: A classic case of a guy who did the right thing, but had it turn out wrong. Let the IBF pathetically strip him of its title so he could challenge Jose Luis Castillo for the world 135-pound title in March, and found himself in over his head, losing by 10th-round kayo. In interviews since, however, "The Kid" has firmly stated that he has no regrets for facing the ultimate test over a pointless mandatory. In lone fight since, blew out no-hoper Marco Angel Perez (KO 1).
Future: Following another expected warmup win over Tomas Barrientes in August, should be ready to mix with the division's best again. Still a young, capable fighter, if not quite undisputed championship material.

72 JOSE NAVARRO Junior Bantamweight 22-1 (10)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Had a palindrome of a campaign, with identical third-round round TKOs of trialhorse Miguel Del Valle before and after his January title shot against Katsushige Kawashima in Japan, which ended in a heartbreaking, hotly disputed defeat. Lost by two points on one card and one point on another, while winning by 11 points on the third. Truly bizarre scoring.
Future: The WBC has correctly given him the first shot at Masamori Tokuyama, who dethroned Kawashima in July. Expect that fight around the end of the year, once Tokuyama has recovered from a hand injury.

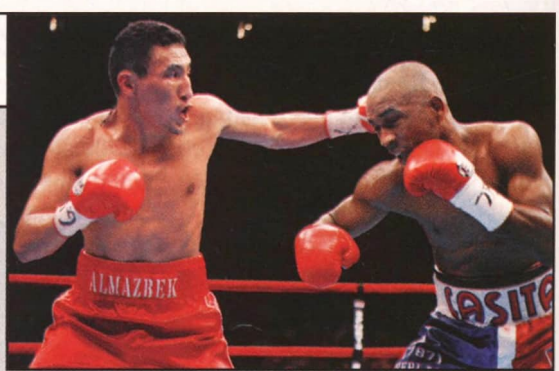
Navarro jousts with Kawashima in losing effort

73 WAYNE BRAITHWAITE Cruiserweight 21-1 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: 70
Status Report: Went in as a slight favorite, but turned out to be slightly overmatched in April bout for vacant RING cruiserweight title against Frenchman Jean-Marc Mormeck. Suffered a seventh-round knockdown en route to a unanimous decision defeat. Size may have been a minor factor, as "Big Truck" came in under the old cruiserweight limit at 188, while Mormeck checked in at 198.
Future: Stuck in a tough position, since it's hard to see him winning a rematch with Mormeck, and there aren't any other big fights for him in the division.

74 ALMAZBEK RAIYMKULOV Lightweight 20-0-1 (12)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: "Kid Diamond" made major strides, advancing from little-known prospect to highly touted prospect to legitimate lightweight title contender. In September, scored nothing win over Jose Luis Soto (KO 2); in November, became the first to stop veteran Lamar Murphy (KO 5); stepped up in March and handed fellow prospect Koba Gogoladze (KO 6) his first loss; and fared admirably in major test in June against Joel Casamayor (D 12).
Future: Not quite ready for Corrales or Castillo, but a rematch with Casamayor or a bout with Juan Lazcano or Julio Diaz could be interesting.



Raiymkulov jabs at Casamayor

75 JOAN GUZMAN Junior Featherweight 23-0 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: 84
Status Report: WBO 122-pound beltholder weighed in as a junior lightweight for November '04 bout with Joe Morales (W 10), then boiled down to junior feather one last time to turn away previously unbeaten Fernando Beltran Jr. (W 12). Having made the commitment to move up permanently, "Little Tyson's" 122-pound tenure has ended without a serious test against any of the division's best.
Future: Will have probably won a featherweight eliminator against Terdsak Jandaeng by the time you read this. With 126-pound ranks thinning out, could be a major player—if he's active and takes meaningful fights.

76 JOHN **RUIZ**
WBA Heavyweight Titleholder 41-5-1 (28) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 58
Status Report: Another interesting year for the heavyweight division's ultimate survivor, if not a year he should be overly proud of. Weathered two knockdowns to come on late and win a debatable decision over Andrew Golota last November (a result that looked a lot worse after Golota's next fight). Then got soundly outfought by James Toney in April, only to get his title back when Toney failed his drug test and the result was changed from a decision loss to a no-contest.
Future: HBO has pretty well had it with his gruesome style, so expect him to ruin Don King pay-per-views until someone finally gets rid of "The Quiet Man."

Ruiz blasts Golota with an overhand right

77 VIVIAN **HARRIS** Junior Welterweight 25-2-1 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: 40
Status Report: Inside and outside the ring, "Vicious Vivian" blew it in '05. After pricing himself out of bigger bouts with Ricky Hatton and Muhammed Abdullaev, finally realized he needed exposure and took an apparent soft touch on the Floyd Mayweather-Arturo Gatti undercard—only to display alarmingly bad stamina and suffer a shocking loss to Carlos Maussa (KO by 7). Eight months earlier, had scored an impressive win over Oktay Urkal (KO 11) in Germany.
Future: Can't try to call the shots anymore; if he's offered an important fight, Brooklyn-based Guyanese fighter needs to take it—and remind us why we were once so high on him.

78 DeMARCUS **CORLEY**
Junior Welterweight 29-4-1 (16)

Last Year's Ranking: 73
Status Report: Has taken over for James Leija as the junior welterweight division's most dangerous gatekeeper. After an easy win over used-up Darryl Tyson (W 10) in December, went to Puerto Rico and gave unbeaten sensation Miguel Cotto by far his scariest fight. Wobbled Cotto badly in round three despite giving up nearly 20 pounds (unofficially), only to suffer a quick, hometown stoppage loss in the fifth.
Future: Will have to keep playing the opponent role until he breaks through and beats a top guy. We still wouldn't mind seeing a rematch with Cotto.

Corley gave Cotto a tough time

79 VINCENTE **MOSQUERA** WBA Super Featherweight Titleholder 21-1-1 (10)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: After relatively unimportant wins in Panama in August, October, and December '04, came to Madison Square Garden in April and upset Yodsanan Nanthachai for an alphabet belt. Too bad it was off-TV, because it was a thriller, with Mosquera scoring three knockdowns and also suffering the first knockdown of his career en route to a unanimous decision victory.
Future: A talented fighter who could use some U.S. TV exposure. A duel with Jorge Barrios in a Showtime co-feature, anyone?

80 JULIO **GONZALEZ** Light Heavyweight 38-2 (23)

Last Year's Ranking: 65
Status Report: Bounced back from disappointing loss to Zsolt Erdei with two wins over name opponents: Got the better of faded David Telesco (KO 8) in December, then won a thoroughly inconclusive six-round majority technical decision over Montell Griffin in May.
Future: Alphabet title shot against Clinton Woods in Sheffield, England, on September 4 looked like a potential war. Result will go a long way toward determining Californian's future.

81 HASIM **RAHMAN** Heavyweight 40-5-1 (33)

Last Year's Ranking: 89
Status Report: Scored his best win since Lennox Lewis knockout in April '01—though it still wasn't *that* big of a win—by wiping out Kali Meehan (KO 4) at Madison Square Garden last November. Was supposed to follow up with world title shot against Vitali Klitschko, but injuries to the champ derailed it.
Future: Eliminator against Monte Barrett will be done with by the time you read this, and if "The Rock" prevailed, it's back to calling out Klitschko.

82 FABRICE **TIOZZO** WBA Light Heavyweight Titleholder 47-2 (31)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Improbable comeback progressed to the next level when Frenchman iced Dariusz Michalczewski (KO 6) in February, sending the Pole into retirement. The difference between the fleshy cruiserweight of a few years ago and the ripped, motivated light heavyweight of today is remarkable.
Future: Mandatory challenger Jorge Castro is still recovering from a serious auto accident and may never fight again, so maybe the WBA's number-two contender, Medhi Sahnoune, will be next.

Tiozzo's beating of Michalczewski convinces the Pole to retire

83 TRAVIS **SIMMS** Junior Middleweight 24-0 (18)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Not the busy year he was looking for, but an important one in terms of him scoring a win that showed his kayo of Alejandro Garcia the year before wasn't a total fluke. In good spot on Felix Trinidad-Ricardo Mayorga undercard, decisioned veteran Bronco McKart, showing plenty of poise and skill.
Future: Seemingly lost in Don King's massive stable and withering on the proverbial vine, but headed for a rematch with Garcia before long.

84 IVAN **CALDERON** Strawweight 23-0 (5)

Last Year's Ranking: 82
Status Report: Super skillful Puerto Rican just doesn't have the pop in his mitts to keep opponents honest, and that, along with an inability to land a remotely meaningful fight, is stalling his progress. Scored solid wins over Carlos Fajardo (W 12) in November and Noel Tunacao (KO 8) in April, but backed into unimpressive win over totally anonymous Gerardo Verde (W 12) on Mayweather-Gatti undercard in June.
Future: Verde showed how a determined fighter capable of cutting off the ring can give "Iron Boy" problems. A unification against a fellow light-hitter like Yutaka Niida would be a wise move, though Calderon would probably have to travel to Japan.

Stylish Calderon takes aim at Verde

85 YODSANAN **NANTHACHAI** Junior Lightweight 44-3-1 (36)

Last Year's Ranking: 72
Status Report: Just as he was getting that most-dangerous-fighter-you-haven't-seen label, Thailander tripped up against Vicente Mosquera in New York in April. Suffered three knockdowns in losing a unanimous decision, but showed heart and made an entertaining fight.
Future: May get a rematch with Mosquera, though it probably won't be immediate.

86 JORGE **BARRIOS** Junior Lightweight 43-2-1 (31)

Last Year's Ranking: 94
Status Report: Despite giving away six pounds to an opponent who didn't make weight, completely dominated then-undefeated "Mighty" Mike Anchondo (KO 4) in an ESPN2-televised bout. Before that, pounded out a seventh-round TKO of veteran Carlos Uribe. Argentinian is a wacky character with an awkward but highly entertaining fighting style.
Future: Keeping active with August bout in Argentina with Victor Santiago, then hopefully it'll be back to the States to continue building a following.

87 JAVIER **CASTILLEJO** Junior Middleweight 58-5 (40)

Last Year's Ranking: 64
Status Report: As of press time, hadn't had a single fight in past 12 months, but remains in the ratings (though significantly lower than last year) because he had a major fight scheduled against Fernando Vargas.
Future: A win against Vargas makes the 37-year-old veteran a major player again at 154. A loss probably means the end for him as a serious contender.

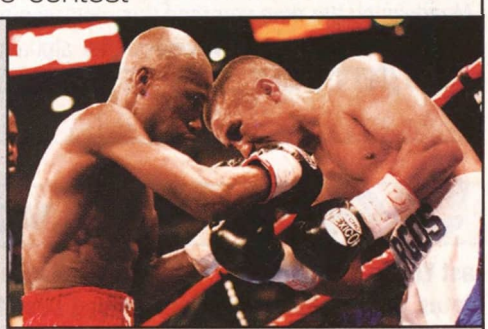
88 MARKUS **BEYER** WBC Super Middleweight Titleholder 32-2 (12)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: On-again-off-again 168-pound beltholder became a three-time titlist by starching Cristian Sanavia (KO 6) last October, but the more important win was a majority decision in his rematch with highly regarded Aussie Danny Green in March. In between, German rose from a knockdown to notch a clear-cut win over Yoshinori Nishizawa (W 12).
Future: Was favored in September fight to become the latest to shut the door in perennial title challenger Omar Sheika's face.

Beyer works on Green's midsection

89 WILL **GRIGSBY** IBF Junior Flyweight Titleholder 18-2-1 (7) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: A definite Comeback of the Year candidate, having ended a 2½ year layoff with three victories and a second IBF title run. Returned with a pair of tuneup wins over journeymen named Ruben—Ruben Puma (KO 1) last November and Ruben Contreras (W 8) in January. Then upset Victor Burgos on the Winky Wright-Felix Trinidad undercard in May, using his high skill level to box to a unanimous decision and a 108-pound belt.
Future: Not a lot of big fights out there for the only American in the junior fly ratings. A rematch with Burgos would seem a possibility.



Grigsby upsets Burgos for IBF belt

90 CLINTON **WOODS** IBF Light Heavyweight Titleholder 37-3-1 (23)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Persistence paid off in fourth title try, as he dominated heavy-handed Rico Hoye (KO 5) in March to claim the vacant IBF 175-pound strap (which had been disgustingly stripped from Glen Johnson a few months earlier). Also gets credit now for two competitive fights with Johnson, who has proven to be a much better fighter than anyone realized at the time.
Future: In tough in first defense against Julio Gonzalez shortly before this magazine hits the newsstands.

91 VICTOR **BURGOS** Junior Flyweight 37-14-3 (22)

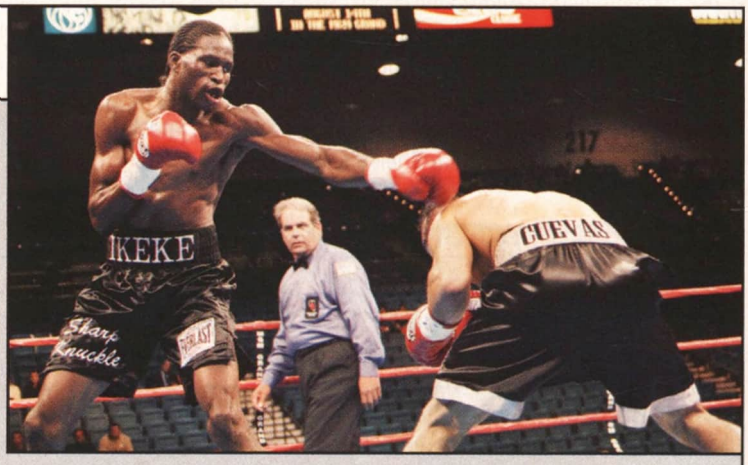
Burgos trades with "Steel" Grigsby in May loss

Last Year's Ranking: 48
Status Report: Hot streak (which had included an impressive draw against Rosendo Alvarez) came to an end with May alphabet title defense against clever boxer Will Grigsby (L 12). Not atypical of little guys in Don King's stable, that was the Mexican's only fight in the past year.
Future: Is he on his way back to being a journeyman? Hard to say, as he's neither old nor young for a 108-pounder at 31, and Grigsby's style could give a lot of fighters problems.

92 RODNEY **JONES** Junior Middleweight 36-3 (22)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: After years of grinding away, mostly with success, against second-rate fighters, well-rounded southpaw finally cracks our top 100 thanks to a solid triumph over dangerous Teddy Reid (W 12) in May. Before that, tallied wins over fringe contender Michael Lerma (W 12) and punching bag Rudy Lovato (W Disq. 2).
Future: It's no surprise that, with his vanilla style (think a poor man's Winky Wright), he hasn't secured a major fight or payday. And there's no reason to expect that to change now.

93 KINGSLEY **IKEKE** Middleweight 23-1 (13)



It's tough to get past Ikeke's reach

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Outrageously tall middleweight proved his worth as a contender with one-sided whipping of veteran Antwun Echols (KO 10) on ESPN2 in April. Prior to that, stopped lesser foes Rene Arostegui (KO 5) and Marcos Primera (KO 4). Seems to be improving in the powerpunching department.
Future: Should have beaten inconsistent Epifanio Mendoza by the time you read this, and then may get a shot at a vacant title whenever the alphabets decide to start stripping.

94 RATANACHAI **VORAPIN** Bantamweight 63-8 (42)

Last Year's Ranking: 93
Status Report: Nobody defines keeping busy for the sake of keeping busy quite like this experienced Thailander, who fought six times in the past 12 months, but didn't put his WBO belt on the line once. Scored three knockouts and three six-round decision wins, all against trialhorses and novice pros.
Future: Was scheduled to finally defend his belt in August, against decent Mauricio Martinez.

95 SILENCE **MABUZA** Bantamweight 18-0 (15)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Highly touted South African completed the transition from prospect to contender by winning decisively against world-rated Cruz Carbajal (W 12) in Las Vegas in May. Prior to that, prevailed in homeland against lightly regarded Eric Barcelona (W 12), showing poise in the face of repeated low blows.
Future: Carbajal win made him mandatory challenger to division leader Rafael Marquez, and that fight could come together in late-2005.

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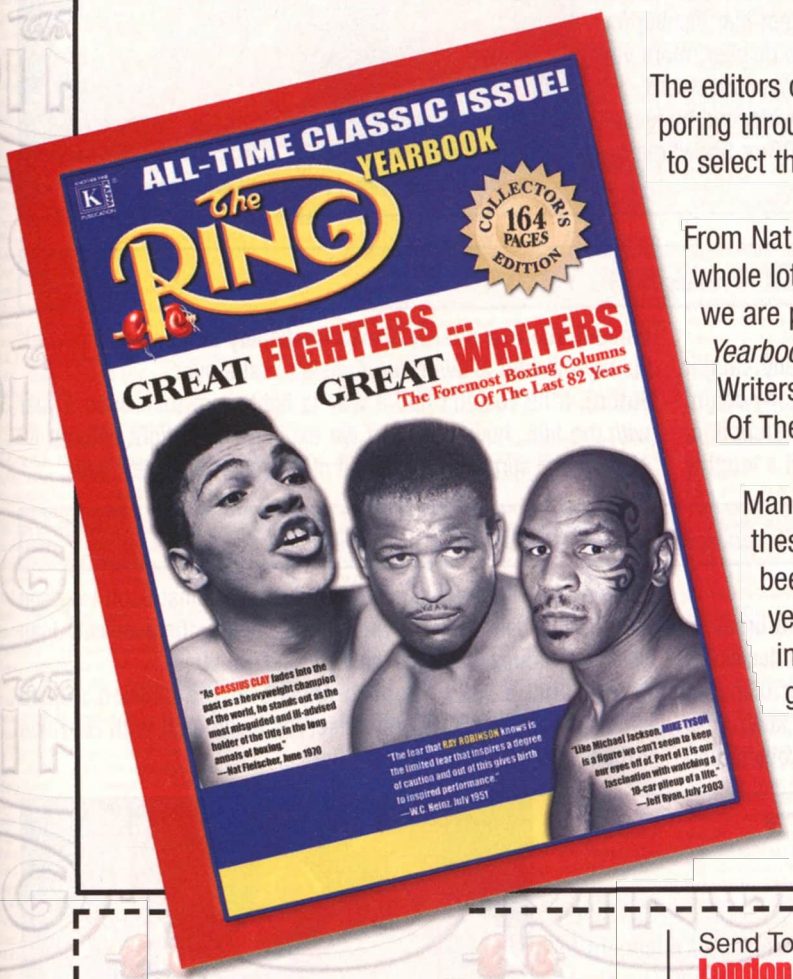

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96 LOVEMORE **NDOU** Junior Welterweight 41-8-1 (27)

Last Year's Ranking: 92
Status Report: Won three fights since last year's RING 100, but lost the only one that really mattered (as has seemingly been the case throughout the Australia-based African's career). Wins over Ruben Diaz (KO 6), Jesar Ancajas (KO 2), and Joey de Ricardo (KO 1) kept him inching forward, but were offset by unanimous decision loss to quicker, more versatile Junior Witter on Bernard Hopkins-Howard Eastman undercard.
Future: May be slowing down ever so slightly (as evidenced by knockdowns suffered against Witter), but still a worthy HBO or Showtime opponent for any of the better 140-pounders.

Ndou lands against Witter, but not often enough

97 IRENE **PACHECO** Flyweight 30-1 (23)

Last Year's Ranking: 56
Status Report: Years of barely keeping active finally caught up with him last December, when he dropped his flyweight belt to undefeated Vic Darchinyan via 11th-round stoppage. Was actually doing reasonably well in the bout, until a lengthy timeout due to a nearby fireworks display seemed to throw off his rhythm and allowed the Aussie to take over.
Future: If he couldn't find a way to fight more than once a year *with* the title, how often can we expect him to fight without it? Wouldn't be surprised if he's out of the top 100 by next year.

98 VICTOR **POLO** Featherweight 34-5-3 (24)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: The Colombian who just can't catch a break in title fights, losing in previous tries by split and majority decisions, missed out twice more this year—once on another disputed decision and once in a fight that wasn't close. After a keep-busy win last October over Evert Garcia (W 10), went to Scotland and came away with a dubious 12-round draw against Scott Harrison for the WBO belt, then got virtually shut out by the excellent Juan Manuel Marquez (L 12) for the WBA and IBF titles.
Future: Still a valid threat to anyone in the division ranked south of Marquez. Certainly deserves a rematch with Harrison if the Scot can't land a bigger fight.

99 MONTE **BARRETT** Heavyweight 31-3 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Furthered his reputation as a bad choice of opponent for undefeated heavyweights, as he turned away Owen "What The Heck" Beck (KO 9) in an excellent, bloody, back-and-forth bout on Showtime. His heart and veteran savvy have proven key characteristics in his march up the rankings.
Future: Will have fought Hasim Rahman by the time you read this, and a title shot will be forthcoming if "Two Gunz" has pulled off the upset.

Barrett breaks down Beck's defense en route to kayo victory

100 LAMON **BREWSTER** Heavyweight 32-2 (28)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: We saw the best and worst of the talented Californian this year. He barely showed up for September bout with lightly regarded Kali Meehan, was nearly stopped in the eighth round, and went on to win a hard-to-figure split decision. Then roared back in May against Andrew Golota, overwhelming the Pole with his speed, power, and dangerous left hook to score three knockdowns and win in the first round.
Future: Taking a bigger risk than most realize by going to Hamburg, Germany, on September 28, to face decent Luan Krasniqi. Will not be able to perform like he did against Meehan and get a victory.

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May 1991: The Heavyweight Division: Alive And Punching. Also: Simon Brown, Marcos Villasana, Year That Was: 1964, Gene Tunney, Chavez-Taylor preview.

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FORMER WBA FEATHERWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER BARRY McGUIGAN

PROFESSIONAL TRIUMPHS AND PERSONAL TRAGEDY

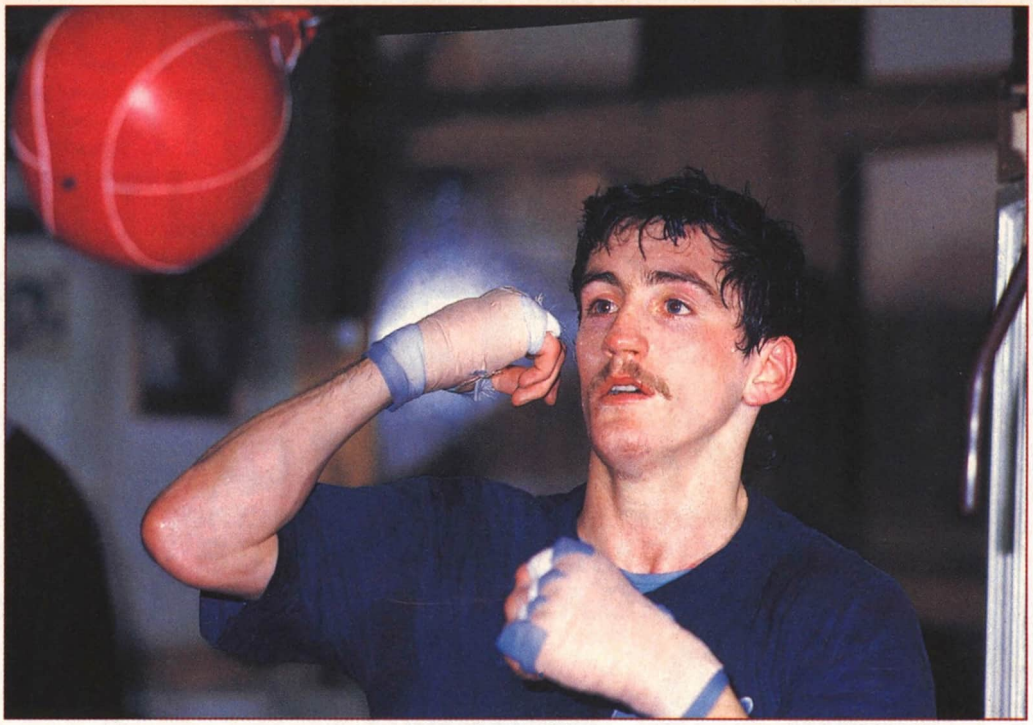
By Brian Doogan

It was the most magical day of his 44-year-old life, the memories of which will live with him forever. His wife, Sandra, and sons Jake and Shane shared it with him. One of his sisters flew in from Minnesota and an uncle from Florida. Daniel Day Lewis, the actor he trained for his title role in *The Boxer*, arrived from New York and, from Ireland, Sean McGiven, who ran with him around Bangor before most of his fights. His mother, Kate, sat on Ryan O'Neal's knee and Russell Crowe, who starred in *Cinderella Man*

Then and now: A huge throng of fans greeted McGuigan when he returned to Belfast following his title-winning fight with Eusebio Pedroza in 1985 (right). In June 2005, McGuigan was enshrined in the International Boxing Hall of Fame, where he is pictured shaking hands with admirers on his way to the induction ceremony.

PHOTO BY PAT ORR

The RING UPDATE



In his prime, McGuigan was a two-fisted action fighter who generated an abundance of excitement. Although his career was relatively short, he had a tremendous impact on the sport, especially in Ireland, where his fights united the warring Catholics and Protestants. Being selected to the Hall of Fame is a career highlight.

and *Gladiator*, came into town just to shake his hand.

There are a multitude of experiences from his past that he will always cherish: a night in London when 27,000 people inside Queens Park Rangers football ground, and 20 million more watching on television, roared him to victory over Eusebio Pedroza; an afternoon in Belfast when 100,000 people, Catholic and Protestant, lined Royal Avenue to welcome him home; a rainy evening on the Diamond (the town square) in his hometown of Clones when over 10,000 people kept singing, "He's got Eusebio Pedroza in his hands." But for Barry McGuigan, the day of his enshrinement in the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York, meant so much that even though his heart felt like singing, he struggled just to find words as he stood on the podium.

For he was thinking of his brother, Dermot, always first into the ring to celebrate his victories and the person who would have been the first to embrace him on this day, too, had he still been alive. In his thoughts was Young Ali, the Nigerian fighter he knocked out in 1982, who had to be carried out of the ring, lifeless and wrapped in a white sheet, back to his pregnant wife in Africa. And he remembered his father, Pat, who fueled his love for boxing and sent his soldier son out to fight by singing a song from the center of the ring that expressed the sweetest and most poignant of sentiments: *But come ye back when summer's in the meadow or when the valley's hushed and white with snow. 'Tis I'll be here in sunshine or in shadow. Oh Danny Boy, oh Danny Boy, I love you so.*

God, how he wished the three of them were here to see this.

***

It was seven o'clock on a cold January evening when the ex-boxer took the phone call in the kitchen of his big farmhouse in the middle of the Kent countryside. The caller's name, Ed Brophy, was unfamiliar, but he had important news: "Barry, you've been elected into the International Boxing Hall of Fame. Congratulations." For a moment McGuigan's senses went numb. Then he managed to exclaim, "Oh my God." He expressed his gratitude to Brophy and ran into his front room to share the news with his family, hollering almost manically. Of course, he had harbored hopes that the day would come, but he had never thought long about it. Better not to build up his hopes, so he wouldn't be disappointed. He didn't even know that his name was on the ballot.

For McGuigan knows much about the highs and lows that life can bring. In and out of the ring, he has suffered incredible pain as well as experiencing the purest joy. In 1997, he was having the best year of his life, traveling back and forth between England and Dublin where he was working on the set of *The Boxer* with the writer and director, Jim Sheridan, and Daniel Day Lewis, whom he had honed into fighting shape, when another phone call interrupted, altogether different from Brophy's.

"I'm sorry, Barry, Danika has leukemia," his doctor told him. In a daze, he rushed home to be with his sick daughter.

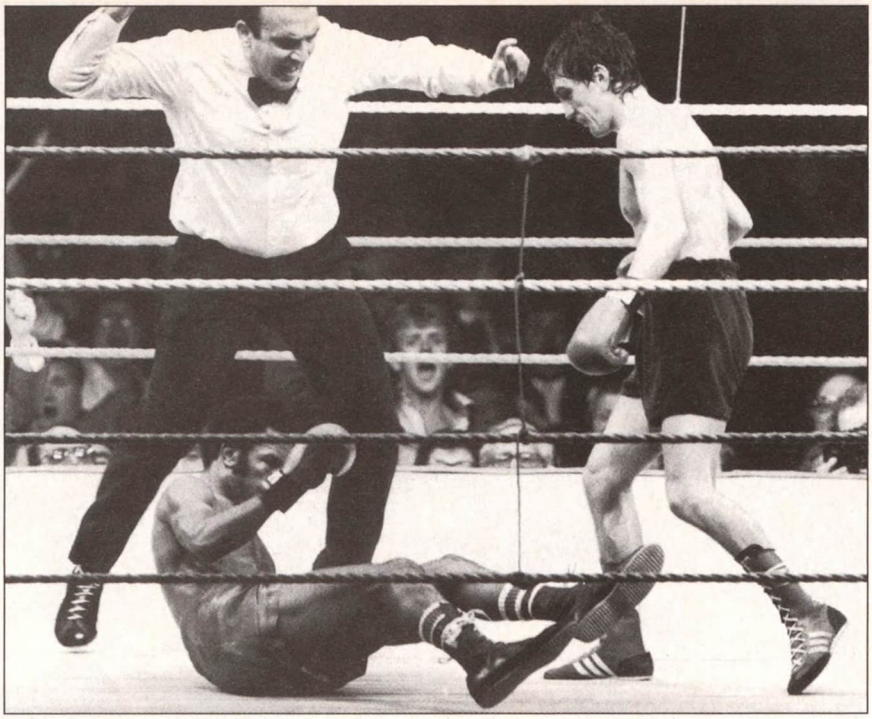
"The illness had manifested itself in an ear, nose, and throat virus and seemingly she'd gotten over it, but one morning she woke up and said, 'Mammy, I feel very sick,' and the results from the tests were every parent's nightmare," McGuigan recalled shortly after returning home from Canastota. "Danika started her chemo treatment right away, and for six weeks we were by her bedside. For a long time after that we didn't know what way it might go. But she was really brave, kept battling away. I can't say enough about the way the nurses and doctors cared for her and helped the family and, thank God, in the end she made it. She's studying drama in Dublin right now and she'd like to become an actress. She's a little dynamo, a wonderful child, but I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy what she and my whole family went through."

McGuigan is most of all a family man. He married his childhood sweetheart and together he and Sandra have raised four children. Danika is the only girl. Blaine, the eldest, writes music and is interested in politics. Jake is a golfer, a pupil at the David Leadbetter Academy in Bradenton, Florida, and Shane, the youngest, is still a student. But boxing remains an essential element of McGuigan's life. He is co-founder and presi-

dent of the Professional Boxers' Association, a body whose purpose is to advise fighters in Britain about investing their money, setting up a pension plan, and educating themselves for life outside the ropes. His newspaper column is published every week in the *Daily Mirror* and his incisive, forthright views are articulated authoritatively on terrestrial network ITV after 10 years of working the big fights for Sky TV.

There was a time in his life when he had immersed himself in his media work so completely that he woke up one morning in a hotel room in Detroit, after 10 days of traveling non-stop, and did not know where he was. He was trying to bury his grief, for he had lost the two men closest to him, his brother, Dermot, and his father. Pat McGuigan was his son's inspiration, a musician who befriended, among others, Cus D'Amato and a young Mike Tyson on his travels, returning home once to tell his sons about this "15-year-old fighter who will be heavyweight champion of the world." It was Pat who first took "wee Barry" to a boxing club at Wattlebridge and built him a gym of his own where he and Dermot would hammer away at one another, having read about their heroes' exploits in the pages of THE RING and *Boxing News*.

"My father started me in boxing and dedicated his life to me in boxing. He played such a vital role, singing for me before I went out to fight and risk my life in the ring," McGuigan reflected. "I could never listen to the words of 'Danny Boy,' because the song's just too emotional, especially when you think who was singing it. Most of the time boxers come out unscathed—but not always."

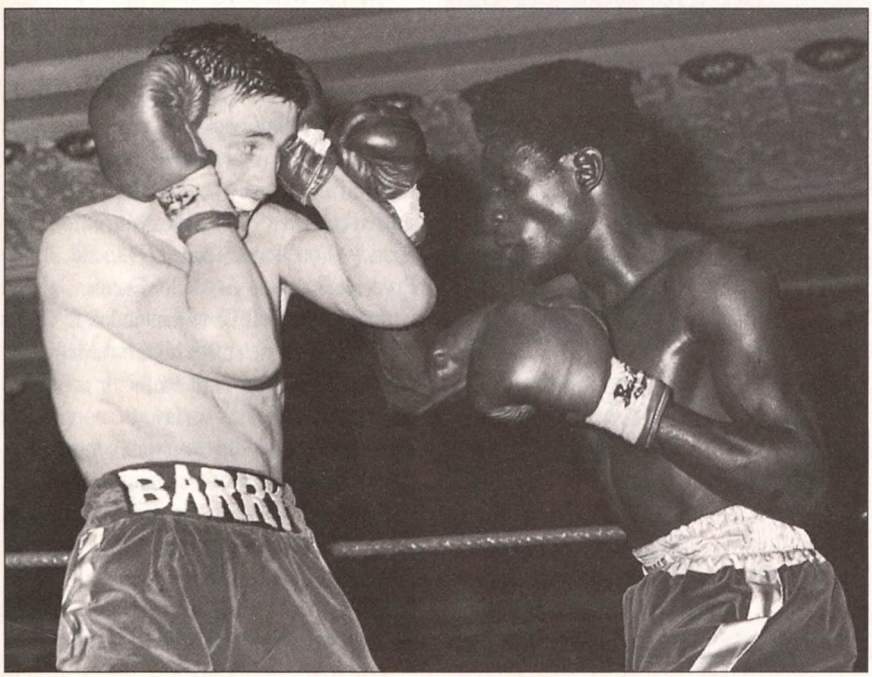


The biggest victory of McGuigan's career came against long-reigning Pedroza at the Queen's Park Rangers soccer stadium. The 24-year-old Irishman floored Pedroza in the seventh and went on to win a unanimous 15-round decision to take the WBA featherweight belt.

Not on the night of June 14, 1982, at the World Sporting Club in London when McGuigan engaged in his 12th professional bout, against West African bantamweight champion Young Ali. He was tough and quick, had a good chin, and wasn't afraid to mix. When you thought you had him, he would fight back. Near the end of round five, McGuigan connected with a hard right hand to the jaw and his opponent was hurt. The bell intervened, but in round six McGuigan landed two more right hands to devastating effect. Young Ali fell flat on his face. In the McGuigan corner they should have been celebrating, but everyone was eerily muted. It was as if people knew that death was visiting this place.

For days, weeks, and months afterward McGuigan prayed. Doctors removed a subdural haematoma from inside Young Ali's skull, but the damage was too great, and five months later he slipped away, leaving his tearful wife disconsolate.

"I used to get up every morning and walk to a place called the red bog, near where I lived, and I'd wander round there for hours, me and my dog, Bandit," revealed McGuigan, who was haunted by the experience.



McGuigan has his earmuffs on as Nigerian Young Ali attacks during their 1982 bout in London. The fight ended tragically when Ali died after suffering a sixth-round knockout. McGuigan was so upset he almost quit boxing and still thinks about Ali on a regular basis.

McGuigan shares the spotlight with his father, Pat, following a successful defense against Bernard Taylor. The elder McGuigan, who got his son started in boxing at an early age, was famous for singing "Danny Boy" before the start of Barry's fights.

"But I couldn't do that forever, and ultimately I had to decide what I was going to do. I was an intelligent guy, but I hadn't done my books and had no qualifications. I'd dedicated my entire life to boxing. I would have to go back to school. But Sandy was pregnant—I knew his wife was, too, which was deeply upsetting—so I put myself in his shoes. *What would Young Ali have done?* In the same circumstances, I think he'd have carried on boxing, and that's what I decided. But he never left my mind and he never will. Life … life's horrible sometimes and that's the way it is."

His father had been a pillar throughout this ordeal, but he died during McGuigan's bitterly fought court case with his former manager, Barney Eastwood. By then McGuigan had lost the featherweight title to Steve Cruz, and his father's passing left him devastated and bereft of the old fire when he launched a comeback that culminated in defeat to Jim McDonnell and his instant retirement in May 1989. McGuigan, who compiled an overall record of 32-3 (28), was just coming to terms with his father's death when he sustained another, even crueler blow.

"Dermot taking his life was disastrous, just a disaster," McGuigan said, the torture clear in his tear-filled eyes. "He lacked self-esteem and in many ways lived his life through me. I think his life changed when my life changed and I moved across to England. There's no doubt my moving away had an effect on him.

"His relationship with his girlfriend was on the rocks and he was taking antidepressants and started drinking, which he'd never done before. So I took him over here and he stayed for six weeks and seemed to be getting better. A psychiatrist said he was 'parasuicidal,' which means he'll threaten it but he won't do it. He'd say, 'I could just walk into a lake,' and I'd tell him, 'Jesus, Dermot, please don't do that.' But it was imminent. He tied a rope around his neck and jumped off a banister. That was 1994, my son's birthday. Blaine was 11 years old."

***

He has weathered the four seasons, this 44-year-old man, but the experience of Canastota was like a second spring, the vitality and powerful potential of his youth brought flooding back by the magic in this small town in upstate New York. McGuigan enjoyed immensely the opportunity to talk with the likes of Arthur Mercante, Gil Clancy, Lou Duva, Angelo Dundee, Aaron Pryor, and Alexis Arguello. Dundee let him know that Russell Crowe intended to fly up from New York to meet him, but McGuigan didn't believe him until the actor arrived in the funeral parlor on Sunday afternoon where the fighters and inductees were congregating ahead of the Parade of Champions.

"Lou Duva was joking, 'For God's sake, no one lie down in here,' and I thought Angelo was joking, too, about Russell Crowe wanting to see me," revealed McGuigan. "Anyway, he flew into Syracuse, drove the 20-odd miles into Canastota, and arrived in the funeral parlor as they were about to get the parade underway. I couldn't believe it. He

shook my hand and said he'd admired me from a distance and congratulated me on being inducted into the Hall of Fame. And within five minutes or so he was heading back to Syracuse and on to New York—he'd come all that way just to see me. Incredible! But the whole weekend was incredible, seeing Bobby Chacon and listening to Terry Norris read out a poem he'd written for his dad, which was deeply moving.

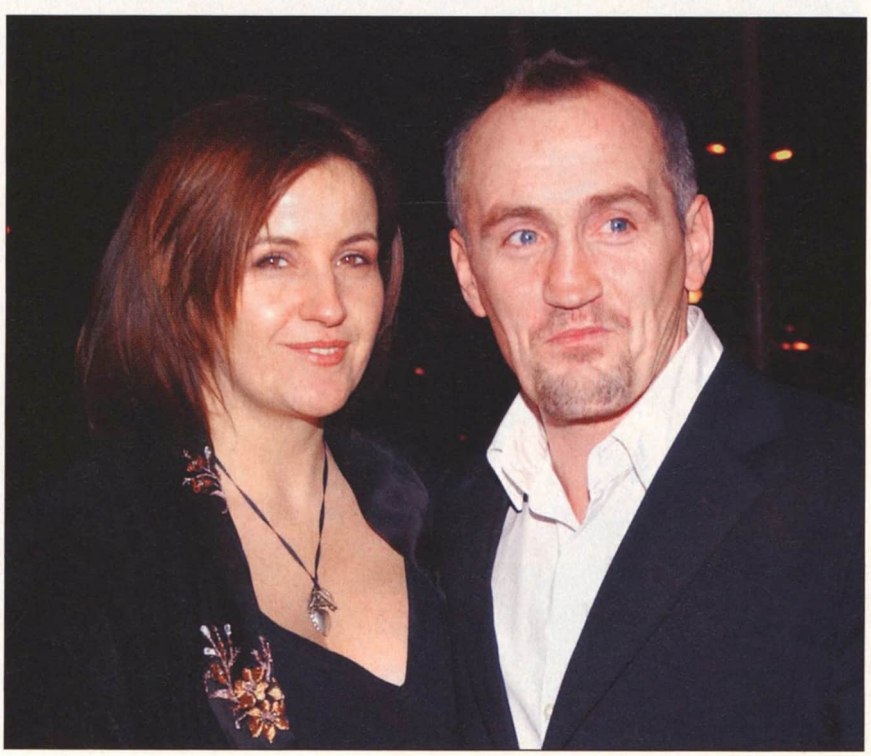
"The one thing I didn't enjoy was the behavior of the dealers, getting the fighters to sign gloves and photographs for their own profit, and, honestly, it was out of control. This spoiled it for genuine fans who wished to get an autograph or a picture taken and it could deter big-name fighters from going back, which would be an absolute shame. I thought the place and the people and the whole experience was just magic and I'd like to see it all preserved and for the museum to flourish in years to come."

In the years of McGuigan's steady rise to the peak of his powers, he became a focal point for people in Ireland and Britain. To try to diminish his impact during this period of bitter violence in a centuries-old conflict is to demonstrate a lack of understanding of all that he meant and represented at the time. He fought under a flag of peace when there was a war going on, and Catholics and Protestants were proud and uplifted when they marched beneath his banner.

"It was a very emotive time. There really was a war going on, people dying every day, and no one needed that," McGuigan declared. "What I represented was a situation where people came together to support me and felt happy and safe, and that's the only support I ever needed and I'm proud of that. There was enough bitterness and hatred going on outside. When I was fighting, I didn't want any of that. I received a letter once from a man in England whose son, a soldier in the British army, had been killed on duty in Northern Ireland and he started his letter, 'The IRA killed my son and I vowed I would never speak to nor have any time for an Irishman again. You changed my mind.' It was a lovely letter. He went on to say that I represented everything in life that he represented and, honestly, I cried my eyes out reading it. I'm sorry I don't have that letter anymore, because it meant a lot to me."

To people from this part of the world, McGuigan meant so much too. Hearts surged with pride whenever he fought, hearts that were being broken by the despair and destruction wrought by the "Troubles," the effects of which were all around. On the evening McGuigan returned in an open-top bus to the Diamond in Clones after beating Pedroza, an 11-year-old boy marched directly ahead of him in St Cecilia's Youth Band from Lisnaskea, playing his accordion, his spirit and horizons raised immeasurably by the way this local hero had toppled the proud champion from Panama. I was that boy. ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.



Although he's had his share of ups and downs both inside and out of the boxing ring, McGuigan's marriage to childhood sweetheart Sandra has been a blessing. They are pictured with son Blain, immediately after the Pedroza fight (above) and many years layer at the Dublin premiere of* The Gangs Of New York *in 2003 (below).

SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Mosese Kavika KO 4 Jiro Ichikawa
China Smith W 10 Louis Monaco
Dan Ward KO 4 Tim Johnson
Mitch Green KO 4 Billy Mitchem

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Jorge Kahwagi KO 2 Roberto Coelho
Thomas Hearns KO 8 John Long
Luis Andres Pineda W 10 Tito Mendoza
Julio Cesar Dominguez W 10
Aaron Orlando Soria
Rodney Toney W 10 James Lubwama
Pietro Aurino W 6 Ramdane Serdjane
Vincenzo Rossitto KO 5
Jesper Kristiansen
Donnell Wiggins KO 3 Norman Johnson
James Brock W 6 Neil Stephens
Anthony Russell W 6 Anterio Vines

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Marika Katonivere W 12 Iobe Ledua
David Whittom KO 1 Dave Nash
Donnell Wiggins W 6 Anthony Greeley

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
William Joppy KO 3 Rashaan Blackburn
Adam Hubinger KO 8 Billy Thompson
Rubin Williams KO 3 Anthony Stephens
Jose Juan Vasquez W 8 Eduardo Ayala
Jefferson Gonçalo W 8 Juraci Conceicao
Alberto Colajanni W 6 Roland Horvath

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Sam Soliman W 10 Fernando Zuniga
Masao Ayusawa KO 1
Suttanong Sor Sittichai
Pradeep Singh KO 6 Timo Masua
Ronald Hearns KO 1 Donald Adams
Gustavo Magallanes KO 3 Rene Arostegui
Sergey Tatevosyan W 6 Ruslan Semenov
Sasha Shnip W 6 Alexander Timovski

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Taisei Marumoto W 10 Teruo Nagase
Ahmed Kaddour W 8 Maxell Taylor
Masato Arai KO 5 Rex Marzan

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY

Junior lightweight Alex Arthur tags Boris Sinitsin

WELTERWEIGHTS

Luciano Abis W 12 Nicolas Guisset
Esau Herrera W 10 Arturo Garduza
DeMarcus Corley W 8 Kevin Carter
Marlon Thomas KO 8 Chantel Stanciel
Paul Tapley W 8 Fabrice Hona
Juan Manuel Buendia W 8 Richard Hall
Xavier Tolliver W 8 Mikel Williams
Mary Jo Sanders W 10 Eliza Olson

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Gianluca Branco KO 4 Farid El Houari
Ernesto Zepeda W 12 Norberto Bravo
Nikita Zaytsev KO 3 Anatoliy Lyubanskiy
Anthony Peterson KO 6 Carlos Valdez
Cesar Rene Cuenca W 10
Carlos Wilfredo Vilches
Mick Shaw W 10 Brad Hemming
Salvatore Battaglia KO 1 Károly Domokos
Eduardo Daniel Roman KO 3 Joao Apetegui
Juan Mosquera KO 4
Jorge Luis Noriega Medrano
Keita Suzuki KO 3 Tetsujiro Sugiyama
Julio Cesar Garcia KO1 Hilario Lopez
Lanardo Tyner KO 1 Ramon Guevara
Witthaya Sithkosol W 8
Kongthawat Singwangcha
Brian Fogarty W 8 Dylan Slater
Teppei Isomichi W 8 Tsuyoshi Takayama
Marlon Davis W 6 Patrick Byrd

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Silverio Jose Ortiz W 10 Daniel Seda
Rolando Reyes KO 8 Courtney Burton
Dennis Laurente W 10 Yuki Yoshizawa
Valdemir Pereira W 10 Víctor Hugo Paz
Valery Kharyanov KO 4 Sergei Tushnolobov
Tyrone Harris KO 8 Ricardo Fuentes
Giovanni Niro W 6 Tibor Rafael
Fernando David Saucedo W 6
Hernan Abraham Valenzuela

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Alex Arthur W 12 Boris Sinitsin
Benoit Gaudet KO 2 Travis Gregory
Juan Carlos Salgado KO 5
Guadalupe Hernandez
Fernando Trejo KO 5 Martin Bermudez
Jimrex Jaca KO 2 Rene Maghuyop
Whyber Garcia KO 3 Dunis Linan
Jose Manuel Lopez KO 5
Leonardo Resendiz
Alfaro Gonzalez W 8 Armando Rojas
Tsuyoshi Adachi W 6 Yasumasa Eguchi

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Ivan Hernandez W 10 Cesar Morales
Marcos Ramirez W 12 Priest Tiger Smalls
Seiji Funami KO 8 Norimit su Ishiguro
Pablo Sepulveda W 8 Diego Sananco
Yasutaka Ito W 6 Yasutaka Kunijima
Rodolfo Lopez KO 6 Humberto Martinez
Gamaliel Diaz Tech. Win 8 Makoto Uehara
Lakhin Vasansit W 6 Dody Agrabio

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Agapito Sanchez KO 5 Art Simonyan
Saenghiran Lookbanyai KO 4 Jack Asis
Rayonta Whitfield KO 4 Antonio Smith
Koji Fujiwara KO1 Chaiyot Or Pramot
Zolani Marali KO 2 Koos Sibiya
Ricardo Castillo W Disq. 8 Edel Ruiz

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Noboru Fukuyama KO 8 Asahi Takano
Genki Irinatsu KO 8 Yasufumi Sato
Oscar Andrade W 12 Paulino Villalobos
Saenghiran Lookbanyai KO 4 Jack Asis
Sairung Suwanasil KO 2 Jack Maldecir
Jose Angel Beranza KO 4 Vicente Perez
Rolly Lunas KO 8 Jaime Acerda
Keisuke Nakano W 8 Hideya Hotta
Futa Nakagishi W 6 Masaki Takatsu
Fabrizio Tronu W 6 Frédéric Gosset

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Ulises Cadena KO 6 Saul Gutierrez
Anthony Mathias KO 11
Tabtimdaeng Na Rachawat
Shungo Yokoyama W 10
Saichon Or Ounsuwon
Gerson Guerrero Tech Win 11
Cecilio Santos

FLYWEIGHTS

Jorge Arce KO 3 Angel Priolo
Pigmy Muangchaiyaphum Tech. Draw 2
Philip Parcon
Hiroyuki Ogino W 6 Tomoyuki Masuyama
Benjamin Garcia W 6 Francisco Arce

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Yukio Wadamine KO 1
Samkolek Chuwatana

STRAWWEIGHTS

Satoshi Kogumazaka W 10 Daisuke Iida

The RING

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BOXING EQUIPMENT
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The RING

FIGHTER of the MONTH

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

After Oscar De La Hoya moved up to 154 pounds in 2001 and defeated Javier Castillejo to win an alphabet belt, he was supposed to make his first defense against mandatory challenger Roman Karmazin. But Karmazin's name meant nothing, and thus the fight meant nothing, and De La Hoya was granted preferential treatment by the WBC and allowed to fight Fernando Vargas instead. Meanwhile, Karmazin was paired with Castillejo for the "interim" title, lost a two-point decision on the Spaniard's home turf, and was expected to drift off to that land where undeserving mandatories go after they lose in their step-up fights.

But Karmazin apparently isn't the drifting-off type. He put three straight quality kayo wins together, and outscored Keith Holmes to earn a shot at Kassim Ouma. Against the heavily favored Ouma, Karmazin was in total control, proving awkwardly effective enough to score two knockdowns and win anywhere from eight to 10 rounds on the judges' cards. The gifts that had kept Ouma undefeated for the previous 5½ years were not in evidence, as Karmazin shut him down in every way possible.

Now, it's certainly possible that De La Hoya avoided Karmazin a few years back simply because the Russian was a nobody. But what we saw happen to Ouma in July suddenly makes it realistic to suggest that maybe, just maybe, Oscar knew more about this nobody than he was letting on. And if indeed De La Hoya was consciously ducking Karmazin … well, now we get why.

• • • •

Roman Karmazin

RINGSIDE REPORTS

Oscar Larios KO 10 Wayne McCullough

Las Vegas, Nevada: Fans that packed the MGM Grand for the Bernard Hopkins-Jermain Taylor fight awaited with eager anticipation the semifinal bout, in hopes of seeing a repeat of the first fight between Larios and McCullough.

It didn't happen.

WBC super bantamweight titlist Larios, 122, Guadalajara, Mexico, fought much smarter this time, making better use of his jab against the charging McCullough, 120, Las Vegas, via Belfast, Northern Ireland. It led to a one-sided and somewhat monotonous affair, quite unlike the highly competitive 12-round slugfest that Larios won by decision back in February.

McCullough, 35, worked hard to get inside the 28-year-old Larios' long jab, but when he did get in close, "The Pocket Rocket" was unable to do any damage. A pair of head clashes cut Larios in the first and third rounds, but otherwise, he was getting precisely the results he was looking for.

By the fifth, Larios was hitting McCullough at will. In round seven, McCullough began to visibly fade. He had been repeatedly stung by hard bodyshots and left hooks to the head. A right cross on the chin rocked the Irishman, and at the end of the eighth, ringside physician Margaret Goodman decided to take a close look at him.

The veteran was allowed to go on, but he was almost defenseless by the 10th round, and it was amazing that McCullough, 27-6 (18), was even staying on his feet. Dr. Goodman paid another visit after the 10th, and after strong protests from McCullough, the doctor advised referee Richard Steele (USA) to stop the fight. It was the only humane decision, as, according to CompuBox, Larios had outlanded McCullough 208-77 over the last four rounds. McCullough trailed by scores of 99-91 (twice) and 100-90 at the time of the stoppage.

"I felt the doctor made the right call," McCullough said afterward. "I felt a bit sluggish tonight."

The victory marked the seventh successful title defense for Larios, 56-3-1 (36), and helped dismiss any concerns over his shaky performance in the first McCullough fight.

Television: HBO Pay-Per-View

Promoter: Golden Boy Promotions

(7-16-05)

Joe Santoliquito

Fernando Montiel W 12 Evert Briceno

Las Vegas, Nevada: Because he's dogged and methodical, and because he weighs as much as Hasim Rahman's right leg, we don't get to see or hear too much about Montiel, 26, Los Mochis, Mexico. But the junior bantamweight contender is one of the most skillful fighters in the business, as he demonstrated against 25-year-old late sub Briceno on the Taylor-Hopkins undercard at the MGM Grand.

Briceno had taken the fight on six days notice after replacing southpaw Eric Morel, who had just been suspended indefinitely by the Nevada State Athletic Commission for pleading no contest to second-degree sexual assault of a minor. Montiel had prepared to face a lefty, but he adjusted well for Briceno. Montiel, 115, entered the fight against Briceno, 115, Managua, Nicaragua, on a streak of four straight stoppage victories. Briceno may have snapped the streak, but Montiel was dominant nonetheless, especially in the earlier stages of the fight.

For the first seven rounds, the speedy Montiel was highly accurate with his punches, attacking both the body and head. But Briceno kept coming forward, making the fight seem close even though Montiel was winning all of the rounds. The Nicaraguan continued to attack, while Montiel fought well backing up and countering. Halfway through the seventh round, Montiel wobbled Briceno with an overhand right hand to the jaw. Sensing he had Briceno, 21-3 (17), in danger, Montiel, 31-1-1 (24), closed in and

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Larios goes to the body in stopping McCullough

rattled off another five shots to the head before pulling out.

In the eighth, Montiel's work rate began to decrease, and Briceno's punch rate rose. Briceno put together a late charge and won some rounds near the end, but the Mexican's lead was insurmountable.

Judge Adalaide Byrd (USA) had it 118-110 for Montiel, while both Burt Clements (USA) and Raul Caiz (USA) had it 117-111 for Montiel, the same as THE RING. The referee was Tony Weeks (USA).

Television: HBO Pay-Per-View
Promoter: Golden Boy Promotions
(7-16-05)
Joe Santoliquito

Vernon Forrest KO 2 Sergio Rios

Las Vegas, Nevada: Making his first ring appearance in two years and four days, it didn't take long for Forrest to shake off the rust against little-known Mexican Rios, scoring a second-round stoppage at the MGM Grand.

Despite winning easily, Forrest, 154½, Atlanta, Georgia, was still feeling some pain shooting up and down his left arm, which had undergone three surgeries, two on his left shoulder and one on his left elbow. The injuries were the reason why Forrest had not fought since losing a controversial decision to Ricardo Mayorga in July 2003.

"It felt good to finally be in there and I finally got this one out of the way," said Forrest, 34. "My left arm hurt a little bit. I definitely didn't feel rusty, but I didn't want to rush things either."

Rios, 17-2 (15), seemed a safe enough target for a comeback. His record suggested he had some knockout power, but the opposition that record was built against wasn't exactly world-class, and Rios, 28, was exposed quickly by the former world welterweight champion.

Forrest caught the slower Rios, 154, Ocotlan, Mexico, with some jabs early on, and then opened up with a deluge of punches near the end of the first round. "The Viper" bounced a four-punch combination off of Rios' head. Then Forrest dropped down to punish the body with another blistering combination.

Forrest, 36-2 (27) with 1 no-contest, entered the second round extremely confident. He wasted little time attacking, landing rights to Rios' head in the opening minute of the round. As the round was winding down, Forrest increased the volume and unloaded a short right that caught Rios square on the chin. The Mexican could do little, though he did try fighting back. He reacted too slowly to Forrest's assault, which finally culminated when another right to Rios' head floored him.

Up on his feet by five, Rios braced himself against the ropes for another Forrest attack. The final blow was a right cross on the jaw that dropped Rios for a second time, prompting referee Kenny Bayless (USA) to quickly intervene and wave a halt at the 2:43 mark.

Television: HBO Pay-Per-View
Promoter: Golden Boy Promotions
(7-16-05)
Joe Santoliquito

Roman Karmazin W 12 Kassim Ouma

Las Vegas, Nevada: Technically, he was made in Russia, but Karmazin goes by the nickname "Made In Hell," and you'll get no disagreement about that from the Ugandan-made Ouma, who had his worst night in the prize ring in nearly six years and dropped the IBF junior middleweight title to Karmazin. The challenger used his 3½-inch height advantage and awkward style to take control early, floored the heavily favored Ouma twice in the third round, and held off the defending titlist's late charges to win a wide, unanimous decision at the Orleans Casino.

Ouma, making his second defense, was expected to win comfortably against the little-known veteran challenger and move on to bigger things, possibly even a bout with 154-pound world champion Winky Wright. But he had two big problems, one very real, and the other rumored (but probably real): One problem was that the Freddie Roach-trained Karmazin turned out to be very capable and dangerous, and the other was that Ouma reportedly was battling an illness leading up to the fight. He certainly fought with significantly less energy and explosiveness than we're used to seeing from him.

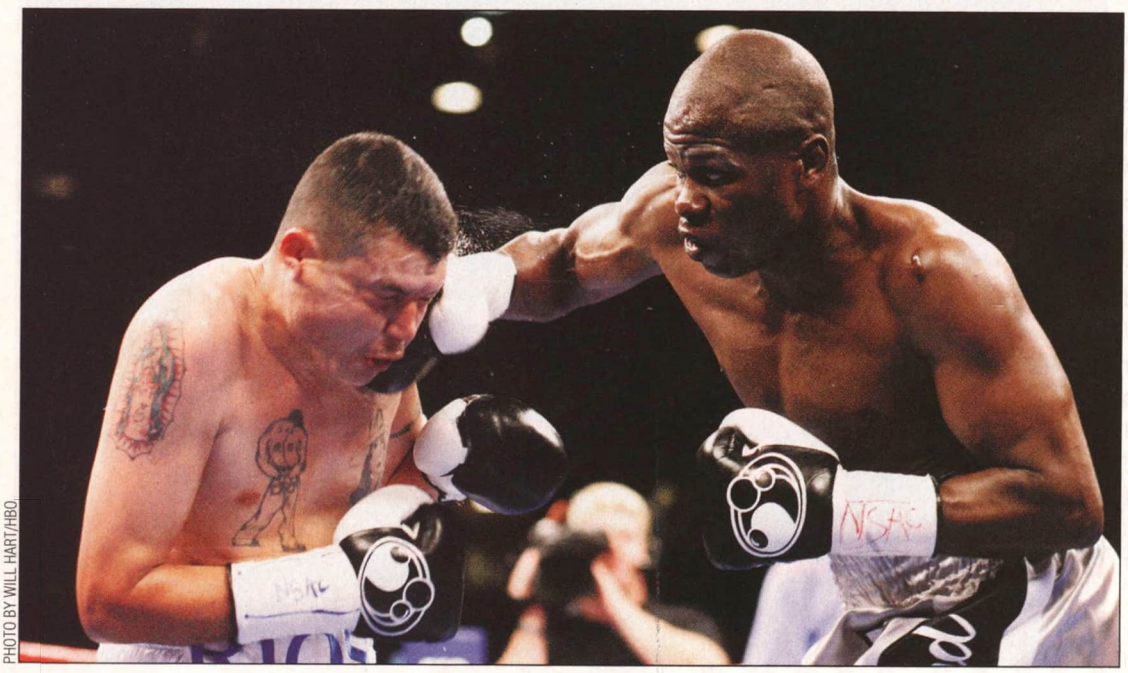

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Forrest smashes a right into Rios

Ouma, 154, West Palm Beach, Florida, via Uganda, often a slow

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Karmazin stings Ouma with a jab

starter, did very little in the first two rounds, allowing Karmazin, 153½, to establish a rhythm and a lead. In the third, Ouma's fans were suddenly woken up to the fact that this was more than just your typical slow start, as a left to Ouma's side knocked him off-balance and to the floor. "The Dream" rose quickly, but soon a right hand to the chin sent him crashing down along the ropes again, and this time he was unquestionably hurt.

Ouma, 26, survived and showed heart as he tried to battle back into the fight in the middle rounds, but he just couldn't solve Karmazin's long-armed style. The Russian was able to keep the southpaw outside with jabs, and could unfurl quick right hands and left hooks when Ouma did sneak into range. Though Ouma tightened the scorecards a little bit over the middle stretch of the fight, Karmazin, 32, had more in the tank in the last three rounds, and continued to land punches and frustrate the depleted Ugandan.

All three American judges had Karmazin winning handily. Glen Hamada saw it 118-108, Patricia Jarman scored it 117-109, and Chuck Giampa saw it 116-110. The referee was Robert Byrd (USA).

"I told everyone that he was a good fighter, but not a superstar," Karmazin, 34-1-1 (21) with 1 no-contest, said of Ouma. "My prior fight, with Keith Holmes, was a much tougher fight."

Karmazin said he would be glad to grant Ouma, 21-2-1 (13) with 1 no-contest, a rematch, and Ouma's co-manager, Tom Moran, told THE RING that a rematch is precisely what the ex-titlist wants. Nothing had been negotiated as of press time, however.

Television: HBO Latino

Promoter: Golden Boy Promotions

(7-14-05)

Masamori Tokuyama W 12 Katsushige Kawashima

Osaka, Japan: Former beltholder Tokuyama, 115, impressively reversed a shocking first-round kayo loss and regained the WBC super flyweight belt from Kawashima, 114¾, by unanimous decision over 12 heats. Tokuyama made excellent use of stinging lefts, piled up points steadily, and survived a flash knockdown in the 12th round to prevail by the following scores: James Jen Kin (USA) had it 118-109 (giving just the 10-8 final round to Kawashima), Hisatoshi Miyazaki (Japan) saw it 117-110, and Kazuo Abe (Japan) scored it 115-112.

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Tokuyama rips a left to Kawashima's body

Tokuyama fought much better than people had expected—and much better than in either of their previous two meetings (prior to the kayo loss, Tokuyama won a close decision over Kawashima in 2003). While Kawashima had kept busy defending the belt, the former titlist had been thinking over whether he would go on or hang up the gloves for good. Tokuyama, a notorious drinker, stopped drinking, and resumed training seriously in the spring to get ready to regain the belt.

From the first round, Tokuyama began to throw accurate and fast jabs and left-right combinations to the face of Kawashima, who looked tense, stiff, and unable to cope with the challenger's speed. Tokuyama's trademark jabs became sharper and sharper as the contest progressed. Good one-two combos helped him to sweep the first six rounds with ease, while Kawashima kept throwing single roundhouse shots, missing the target. Tokuyama's overhand rights opened a gash on Kawashima midway through the fifth, though the cut didn't become a factor.

Tokuyama, the same age as his former conqueror at 30, began to show signs of fatigue in round seven, when Kawashima landed big left hooks and overhand rights. The taller Tokuyama, however, cleverly turned to hit-and-grab tactics to handle his fatigue, and managed to win the eighth through 11th sessions. Kawashima let loose wild swings in an effort to repeat his previous TKO win, but Tokuyama was neither careless nor overconfident on this night.

He nevertheless experienced in minor scare early in the 12th, when a counter right from Kawashima sent him to the deck. Tokuyama truly lost his balance, slipping on the wet canvas, but it seemed a knockdown more than a slip. Referee Ian John Lewis (England) properly counted against the protesting challenger up to eight. Kawashima, 28-4 (18), then went all out for the finish, desperately swinging wild shots only to miss time and again.

Tokuyama, 31-3-1 (8), is supposed to next face WBC top contender Jose Navarro, who lost a highly controversial decision to Kawashima in January. "I'll prove superior to Kawashima," Tokuyama said, "by decisively defeating Navarro before my supporters."

Promoter: Kanazawa Promotions

(7-18-05)

Joe Koizumi

Mahyar Monshipour KO 9 Julio Zarate

Poitiers, France: When real crisis threatened to separate Monshipour, 122, Poitiers, France, from the WBA super bantamweight title, he responded by displaying incredible heart. Floored in the fourth round by a rampaging Zarate, 122, Mexico, and clearly in trouble, the 30-year-old France-based Iranian dug deep to force his Mexican challenger to quit. When Zarate did not leave his stool when the bell rang for the ninth round, it marked the first stoppage defeat suffered by the 29-year-old Mexican and Monshipour's fifth successful defense.

The bout was held in a ring on a temporary float in the middle of a lake (called the Futuroscope) and it proved worthy of such an impressive setting. Zarate was moving up from bantamweight, where he had held the WBA interim title and then the full title following Johnny Bredahl's retirement. But he lost that belt in February to Wladimir Sidorenko on points and elected to move up. Monshipour had stopped every challenger since taking the belt from Salim Medjkoune in July 2003 and his target was a unification fight against Mexico's Oscar Larios.

"I'd love to fight Larios in California where there's a big Iranian population," he said. "Everyone says that Larios is number one, and I know by watching him that boxing is in his blood. He moves well and has good balance. But I have the heart to succeed in what I do."

Against Zarate, he demonstrated this convincingly. The challenger began the fight well, refusing to give ground to the naturally bigger man and proving that he was strong enough to mix it in close with one of the most dynamic exponents in the division. Damaging uppercuts were connecting with Monshipour's chin. Zarate was forcing the action. Then in the fourth, Zarate landed a solid left hook followed by a straight right and Monshipour went down. He was clearly hurt.

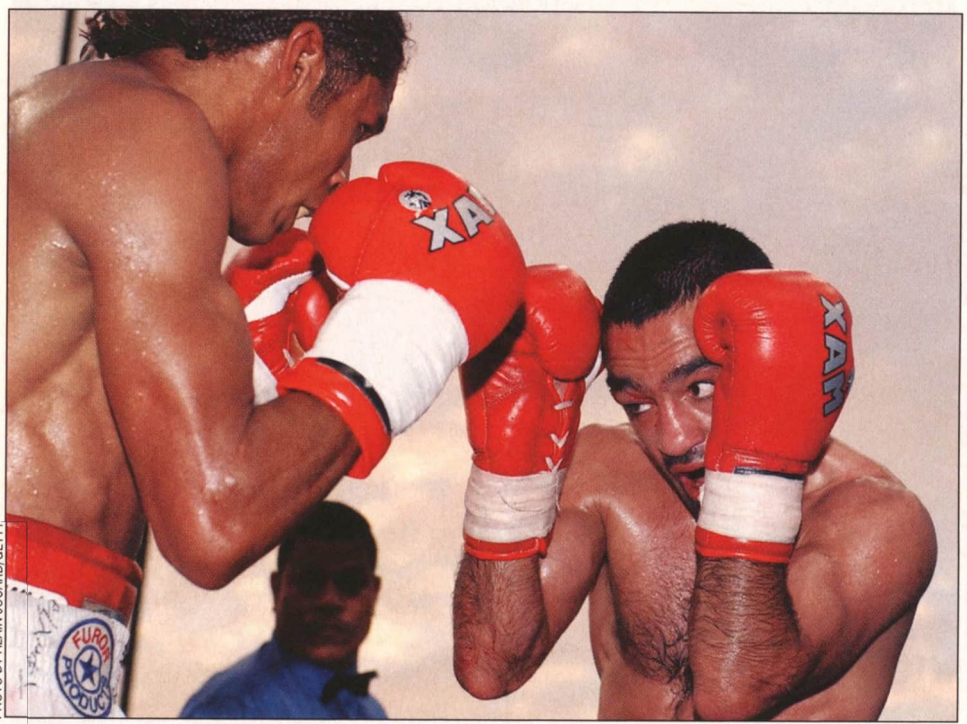

PHOTO BY ALAIN JOCARD/GETTY

Monshipour has his guard high against Zarate

It was then that Monshipour showed all his courage and class. Driving home two-fisted assaults, he began to undermine the ambition and strength of the Mexican. Zarate, 21-4-1 (13), became desperate and was penalized twice for illegal use of his head, having points deducted in the seventh and eighth rounds. He was now caught in the eye of a storm, and a damaging right uppercut near the end of the eighth seemed to take away what little of his resources remained. When the bell rang for the ninth, he decided to stay on his stool, and Monshipour, 28-2-2 (18), and his supporters celebrated in style his hard-fought win.

"The fight against Larios is one we want to make for Mahyar and we

PHOTO BY JOHN BYRNE

Peter hones in on Sykes' head

will talk to his promoter, Golden Boy, about it happening early next year," said Michel Acaries, Monshipour's promoter.

(6-25-05)

Brian Doogan

Samuel Peter KO 2 Taurus Sykes

Reno, Nevada: Heading into his scheduled 12-round bout with Peter, some observers thought that Sykes would provide the stiffest challenge yet for "The Nigerian Nightmare." The 6'2", 235-pound Brooklynite expressed similar thoughts at the final prefight press conference, saying he'd "pull the covers off and expose" his free-swinging opponent and send him into oblivion.

But after a merciless second-round mauling by the 24-year-old Peter, who looked like a pit bull tossing around an oversized chew toy, it was Sykes who ended up exposed in front of 2,800 fans at the newly constructed Reno Events Center.

The 6'1" Peter, 243, Las Vegas, Nevada, came forward steadily, moving in behind an improving jab while trying to open up the 30-year-old Sykes' body in the first round. For his part, Sykes wasn't as mobile as usual and unwisely tried to match Peter's strength by standing in front of him, launching an occasional jab of his own.

Sykes began to feel pretty good about himself midway through the second, sticking out his tongue and smiling as he flicked out some light jabs and began an organized retreat. However, the first time Sykes failed to tie up Peter with both arms in a clinch, the transplanted Nigerian clubbed him with an overhand right, causing "The Bull" to do a Texas two-step as his knees buckled.

Peter, 24-0 (21), launched a furious 15-punch assault, pummeling Sykes from one side of the ring to the other. With his face contorting in rage with every shot, Peter landed three rights that spun Sykes around, leaving his unguarded head bobbing on the top rope for the *piece de resistance*, a left hook-right hand combo that sent him face-first to the canvas.

Referee Vic Drakulich (USA) waved it off at 2:07 of the round after Sykes, 23-2-1 (6), attempted to sit up, but sagged back over the bottom rope, clutching his aching forehead.

"He's a lot stronger than I anticipated," said Sykes after the fight, holding an ice bag over his left eye. "It's all my fault. I came out of the pocket a little bit when I got caught. He's easily jabbed and hit. He's definitely strong, but I see a boxer giving him trouble. Not Chris Byrd. Maybe James Toney."

Even though there are four alphabet titlists out there, it's hard to see any of them rushing to give a shot to Peter, who added Sykes' NABA belt to his UBSA and NABF regional strap collection and proved he's ready to take the next step in his career by taking on fellow contenders.

"In a year or less, Sam's going to be the best heavyweight in the world," said Dino Duva, Peter's promoter. "He's worthy of a title shot immediately. In the meantime we want to keep him as active as possible and challenge the guys ranked ahead of him."

Peter earned $265,000 for a little over five minutes of work, while Sykes pulled in $90,000.

Television: Showtime

Promoters: Duva Boxing and Tres Amigos LLC

(7-2-05)

Mike Houser ■

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New Faces

(Continued from page 24)

sion, 21-17. But tournament officials noticed the telltale swelling and refused to let Casal fight Antonio Johnson in the semifinal, where a victory would have clinched a spot in the Olympic Trials.

Just like that, Casal's dream was over. Vanes Martirosyan, the fighter Casal defeated to win the Fran Jones Under-19 title, went on to represent the United States in Athens. Even White competed in the Olympics, for Haiti.

Casal, at only 18 years old, was at a crossroads. He could wait around for another four years and take a second shot at the Olympics, or he could ditch his decade-long dream and turn pro. It was fitting, then, that the man who was going to help Casal make up his mind had advised many fighters who had plummeted to similar depths.

"He was very devastated, especially since he had beat Vanes in the amateurs and Vanes was our representative," recalled Shelly Finkel, who had taken a shine to Casal's charisma and thunderous right hand. "We met in New York when we had our meeting about turning pro, and I said to him, 'Look, you're going to have adversities, but the really good ones overcome them. Look at what happened to Roy Jones in the Olympics and Evander Holyfield. It didn't hold them back in the pros.'"

With Finkel willing to manage Casal, a personal dilemma became an easy decision.

"I see these guys that are just turning pro after the Olympics," said Casal, who speaks as frenetically as he fights. "They have four or five fights and don't really impress me. I think I'm doing pretty well. I didn't get that Olympic status, so I had a little more to prove coming out of the blocks. Right now, I feel like I've established myself."

Casal turned pro in June 2004 and hasn't looked back. Before he made his debut, he appeared on NBC's *Today* and was projected as a favorite to land a spot on the network's reality show *The Contender* before producers decided to go with a more experienced cast.

Nevertheless, Casal ripped 11 straight victories to start his pro career. Each ended in a knockout, including seven before the end of the first round. Only two of his bouts lasted beyond the second round.

Casal's second pro bout was televised on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*. He also appeared on the Danny Williams-Mike Tyson and the Diego Corrales-Jose Luis Castillo undercards. He has fought at Caesars Palace and the Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino.

"I want to go for Tyson's record, 19 straight knockouts to start a career," said Casal.

What makes Casal's busy start even more impressive is that he's campaigning at junior welterweight, a dozen pounds lighter than where he fought as an amateur. He explains he dropped the weight through a better diet, less powerlifting, and more running.

"I would say I'm about a year-and-a-half away from fighting for a legitimate title," Casal said. "I'd like to start fighting for the intercontinental stuff. By the time I'm 22, I'd like one or two world championship belts and then fight Floyd Mayweather. You shouldn't be in this business if you don't fight the best."

But the 5'6" Casal is one of the first to admit he has considerable work to do before he can reach world-championship caliber. His heavy hands made it easy for him to march through opponents during his formative years, and defense often was an afterthought.

"He knows if he hits you he's going to take you out," Finkel said. "So he's naturally aggressive. Sometimes he walks in to take you out and gets hit unnecessarily. But I believe in time he will overcome that."

Casal's father has trained him since he started putting together combinations as a four years old. Ray Casal, a former pro kickboxer, operates Casals School of Fighting Arts in Niagara Falls.

Finkel has approached the Casals about letting either Dan Birmingham or Ronnie Shields join the corner.

"He's always going to be a head coach in my corner, but he's always telling me he's willing to step aside to help out," Casal said of his father. "But right now, I don't think I need anybody else. He's the one who got me going. Basically, it's in my blood."

Because of Casal's face-first tendencies, Finkel has been careful in matching his client so far while keeping him busy. Most of his first 11 opponents either had losing or .500 records. But Finkel claims Casal has found a comfort level and will start upgrading competition before the end of the year in hopes of obtaining a top-10 ranking by early-2006.

"I'm relaxed now," Casal said. "I've matured as a fighter. I'm calmer. I see things more in the ring. I'm not antsy anymore. Everything has slowed down. To be a good professional everything has to slow. My defense has improved 100 percent. I don't get hit too much anymore. I think my defense is a B- or a B+, somewhere in there. By the time I win the title I should be an A.

"I'm not going to fall into that puncher's trap. Those powerpunchers think they don't need to train anymore or learn defense. I train every day."

One can hear the enthusiasm in Finkel's voice when discussing Casal's potential drawing power. Any fighter from Western New York will have his box-office appeal compared to that of former heavyweight contender Joe Mesi, who at his peak filled college basketball and National Hockey League arenas.

"He could follow in the footsteps of Joe Mesi in drawing a big crowd," Finkel said. "I think I have the eye for talent, and I think he is one." ■

Tim Graham covers boxing for the Buffalo (New York) News and is an occasional contributor to this magazine.

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Casal en route to a first-round knockout of Martinus Clay in Glen Burnie, Maryland. It was Casal's 11th consecutive knockout in the pros, which indicates he's more than ready to step up to better opposition.

CLASSIC

From THE RING, April 1960

PAUL PENDER ... IRISH LORE RETURNS

New Middleweight King Puts Emerald Isle Back In Fistic Spotlight

By Nat Loubet

From Londonderry to Killarney the sons of the Old Sod are rubbing their eyes with disbelief. Which leprechaun gave Paul Pender that four leaf clover? It's been long since the wearers of the Green have had a world champ to gladden their hearts.

Time was when the Irish were the undisputed rulers of the boxing world. The immortal John L. Sullivan, along with Nonpareil Jack Dempsey and Jack McAuliffe, controlled three divisions at the same time. That was the Emerald Isle's high tide, although later, during the early-1920s, the sons of Erin contributed as high as 70 percent of the professionals. All the way up through the 1930s the Irish were a dominant force. The 1940s saw the Green fade with other denominations taking the play away from them.

In recent years, there wasn't a son or nephew of Erin listed as a world champion and mighty few rated as serious title contenders.

The invincibility of the Irish, a legend begun by John L, took a lot of erasing, but by the 1930s, Irish champions were limited to Jim Braddock, Ken Overlin, Billy Conn, Jimmy McLarnin, and Freddie Steele.

Ten years later the number had been further reduced, and we find only Freddie "Red" Cochrane and Rinty Monaghan as world title holders and standard bearers for the Irish.

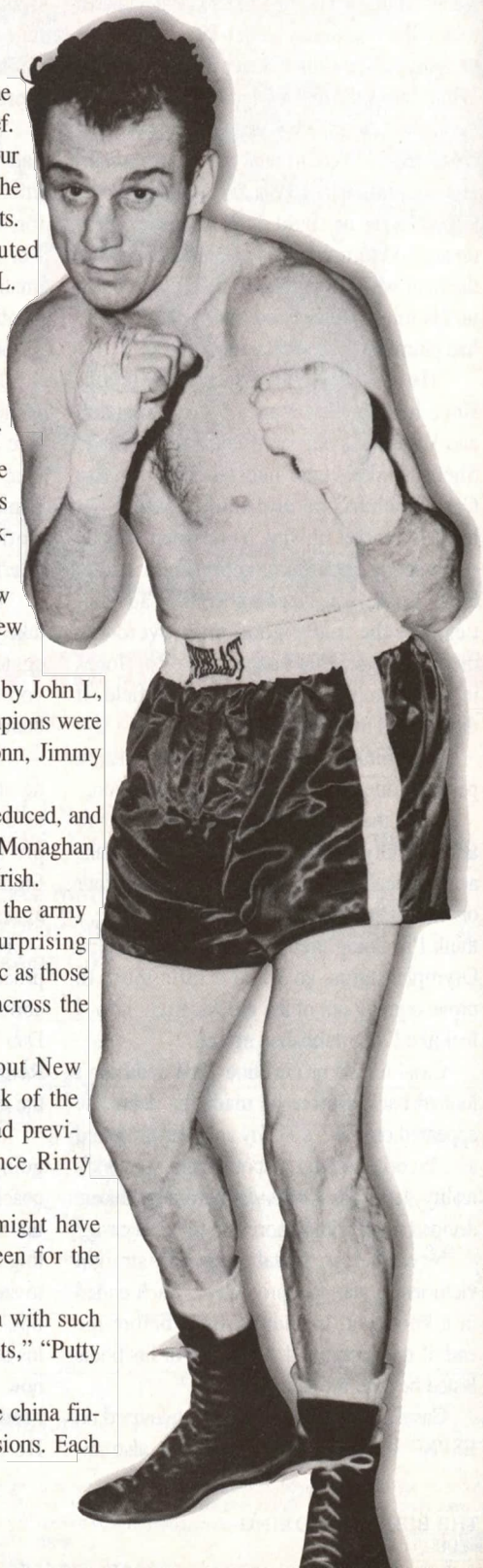
All of which brings us up to the present with the army of "Green," decidedly a meager one. But a surprising thing happened the other night, almost as fantastic as those wonderful fairy stories that emanate and drift across the sea from County Cork.

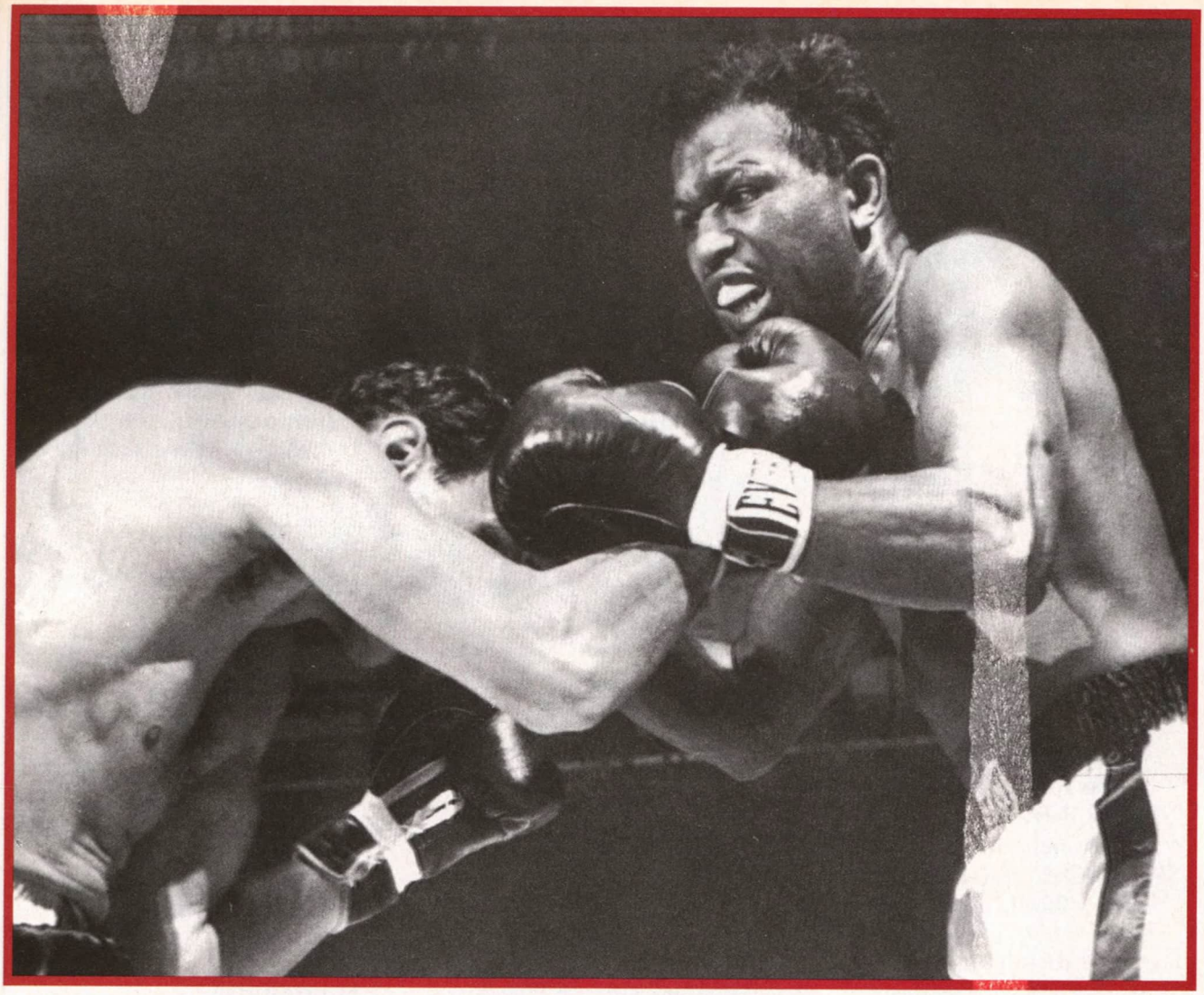
A 5-1 underdog, Paul Pender, an in-and-out New England middleweight clubfighter, with the luck of the Irish and displaying far more ability than he had previously exhibited, became the first Irishman since Rinty Monaghan to win a world crown.

In all fairness, it must be said that Pender might have looked a lot better a lot sooner if it had not been for the amount of trouble he has had with his hands.

This had led sport authorities to surround him with such nicknames as "Peanut Brittle Hands," "Clay Fists," "Putty Handed," etc.

In 11 years of fighting as a professional, these china fingers caused Pender to quit the ring on four occasions. Each





Ray Robinson looks more annoyed than hurt as the light-punching Pender finds his chin with a right. The aged and faded Sugar Ray looked even more upset when he lost his piece of the middleweight title to Pender via 15-round split decision.

time he returned not for the love of boxing, but rather as a necessity, a means of making a living and feeding his wife and children.

The crown he won from Sugar Ray Robinson comprises part of the world crown. Europe, New York, and Massachusetts recognize Pender, while the National Boxing Association stands by Gene Fullmer as the rightful holder of the world middle title.

Sooner or later, the two holders of the world championship must meet, as they usually do, to settle the issue.

In the interim, Pender has his share of glory and the financial gain that goes along with his victory. Perhaps not as much as if he were the universally recognized champ, but sufficient to make a poor man like Pender very happy.

Pender is a queer mixture: part bitter, part tough, part kind. His first thought after winning the title was for his wife, Rose. "I owe her more than I can repay for all those long, hard years," he said, "and before I do anything else, I'm going to take her on a vacation . . . Florida maybe."

He was speaking of the girl he married after a romance that began back in Brookline, Massachusetts High School when Pender was a swimmer and an all-scholastic end on the football team.

Pender, at 29, has learned to treasure the good breaks. They have been few and far between. The years have been long, lean, and hard.

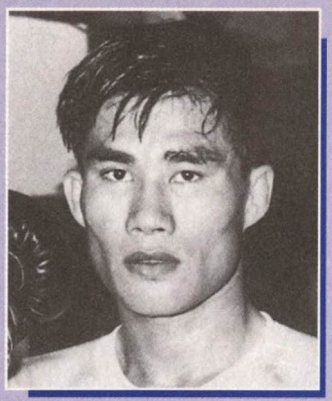
His big ambition after high school was to become a physical education director, and he was offered several college scholarships toward this end, but as so often happens, he passed up his big chance. Just why isn't clear. Perhaps marriage had something to do with his decision to become a politician, and he spent several years at Staley College in Brookline with that as his goal. He then ran for Park Commissioner in Brookline, but failed to make it.

He became a member of the Brookline Fire Department and slipped off on weekends to work as a longshoreman. This added money to the family larder that at its best saw a top pay check of $92 per week from the civil service job.

At the time of his winning the world title, Pender had passed his exams and was on the list to become a police officer in his local town.

The number of smashes life has fed to him is perhaps best seen by a look at his nose. It is bashed to the left side of his face like a piece of Silly Putty, not much like the nose he started out with in life. This may be the reason for his dislike of the game that has finally allowed him immediate escape from everyday drudgery.

THE RING RATINGS, April 1960



Pone Kingpetch

HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Ingemar Johansson, Sweden
1. **Zora Folley,** Chandier, AZ
2. **Floyd Patterson,** Rockville Centre, NY
3. **Sonny Liston,** Philadelphia, PA
4. **Henry Cooper,** England
5. **Eddie Machen,** Redding, CA
6. **Billy Hunter,** Detroit, MI
7. **Roy Harris,** Cut And Shoot, TX
8. **Mike DeJohn,** Syracuse, NY
9. **Joe Erskine,** Wales
10. **Alex Miteff,** Argentina

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Archie Moore, San Diego, CA
1. **Harold Johnson,** Philadelphia, PA
2. **Erich Schoppner,** Germany
3. **Mike Holt,** South Africa
4. **Von Clay,** Philadelphia, PA
5. **Sixto Rodriguez,** San Anselmo, CA
6. **Chic Calderwood,** Scotland
7. **Jesse Bowdry,** St. Louis, MO
8. **Germinal Ballarin,** France
9. **Johnny Halafihi,** Tongo
10. **Sante Amonti,** Italy

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Paul Pender, Brookline, MA
1. **Ray Robinson,** New York, NY
2. **Gene Fullmer,** West Jordan, UT
3. **Gustav Scholz,** Germany
4. **Henry Hank,** Detroit, MI
5. **Spider Webb,** Chicago, IL
6. **Joey Giardello,** Philadelphia, PA
7. **Carmen Basilio,** Chittanango, NY
8. **Dick Tiger,** Nigeria
9. **Joey Giambra,** San Francisco, CA
10. **Holly Mims,** Washington, D.C.

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Don Jordan, Los Angeles, CA
1. **Luis Rodriguez,** Cuba
2. **Rudell Stitch,** Louisville, KY
3. **Ralph Dupas,** New Orleans, LA
4. **Benny Paret,** Cuba
5. **Denny Moyer,** Portland, OR
6. **Charley Scott,** Philadelphia, PA
7. **Sugar Hart,** Philadelphia, PA
8. **Kenny Lane,** Muskegon, MI
9. **Federico Thompson,** Argentina
10. **Duilio Loi,** Italy

LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Joe Brown, Baton Rouge, LA
1. **Carlos Ortiz,** New York, NY
2. **Paolo Rosi,** New York, NY
3. **Dave Charnley,** England
4. **Len Matthews,** Philadelphia, PA
5. **Willie Toweel,** South Africa
6. **Battling Torres,** Mexico
7. **Paul Armstead,** Los Angeles, CA
8. **Johnny Gonsalves,** Oakland, CA
9. **Mario Vecchiato,** Italy
10. **Mauro Vazquez,** Mexico

BANTAMWEIGHTS
World Champ: Joe Becerra, Mexico
1. **Alphonse Halimi,** France
2. **Freddie Gilroy,** Ireland
3. **Eder Jofre,** Brazil
4. **Piero Rollo,** Italy
5. **Leo Espinosa,** Philippines
6. **Danny Kid,** Philippines
7. **Jose Lopez,** Mexico
8. **Ernesto Miranda,** Argentina
9. **Kenji Yonekura,** Japan
10. **Herman Marques,** Stockton, CA

FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Davey Moore, Springfield, OH
1. **Ricardo Gonzalez,** Argentina
2. **Harold Gomes,** Providence, RI
3. **Sergio Caprari,** Italy
4. **Hogan (Kid) Bassey,** Nigeria
5. **Gracieux Lamperti,** France
6. **Paul Jorgensen,** Port Arthur, TX
7. **Rafiu King,** Nigeria
8. **Ike Chestnut,** New York, NY
9. **Percy Lewis,** Trinidad
10. **Sugar Ramos,** Cuba

FLYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Pascual Perez, Argentina
1. **Pone Kingpetch,** Thailand
2. **Sadao Yaoita,** Japan
3. **Minum Ben Ali,** Spain
4. **Dommy Ursua,** Stockton, CA
5. **Ramon Arias,** Venezuela
6. **Hiram Bacallao,** Cuba
7. **Risto Luukkonen,** Finland
8. **Larry Pineda,** Philippines
9. **Nacho Escalante,** Mexico
10. **Johnny Caldwell,** Ireland

Recently, Pender blasted boxing as a racket-ridden business. Called before the Massachusetts State Boxing Commission, he recanted, but in his talks with those covering the fistic beat, he has never disguised his bitter feelings toward boxing. How is this likely to guide his ring future?

"I've had my hands busted seven times, the right four, left three. I'm no longer a kid. All I want is to take home a bundle and call it quits ... the other guys can have the glory," says Pender.

Anyone wanting to get a bet on the chances of Pender becoming a champ between 1952 to 1958 would have been chased out of the bookie's sight as being a fit case for a white jacket. As early as 1951, the signs were there that Pender was "out to lunch" insofar as being a top-notcher. A loss and a draw with Joe Rindone didn't add to his stock, although the loss gave him his largest purse ($6,000) up to his outing with Robinson. In his next fight, he was knocked out by Eugene Hairston in three heats. His wife walked out as he was being belted into submission, and to this day refuses to enter an arena.

When Pender fights, she stays at home, fiddles with the radio, tuning it on and off, and prays for his success and well being.

In 1952, Pender had one fight, which

The 29-year-old Pender has his armed raised in victory following his title-winning bout with Robinson at the Boston Garden. Pender had been a professional since 1949 and had had 41 prior bouts before making good in his first crack at a title.

ended in his being kayoed by Jimmy Beau in five rounds. He left the ring for 2½ years, returning in August of 1954. He fought twice in 1954 and twice in 1955 for coffee money.

His last sockeroo in 1955 was with Fullmer, a losing one over 10 rounds. His hands were still plaguing him. He went into the contest with a bad left, and in the third round broke his right. The remainder of the contest he fought with nerve.

Pender was out of boxing again, this time until December 4, 1956, when with two bad hands he bested Jimmy Skinner.

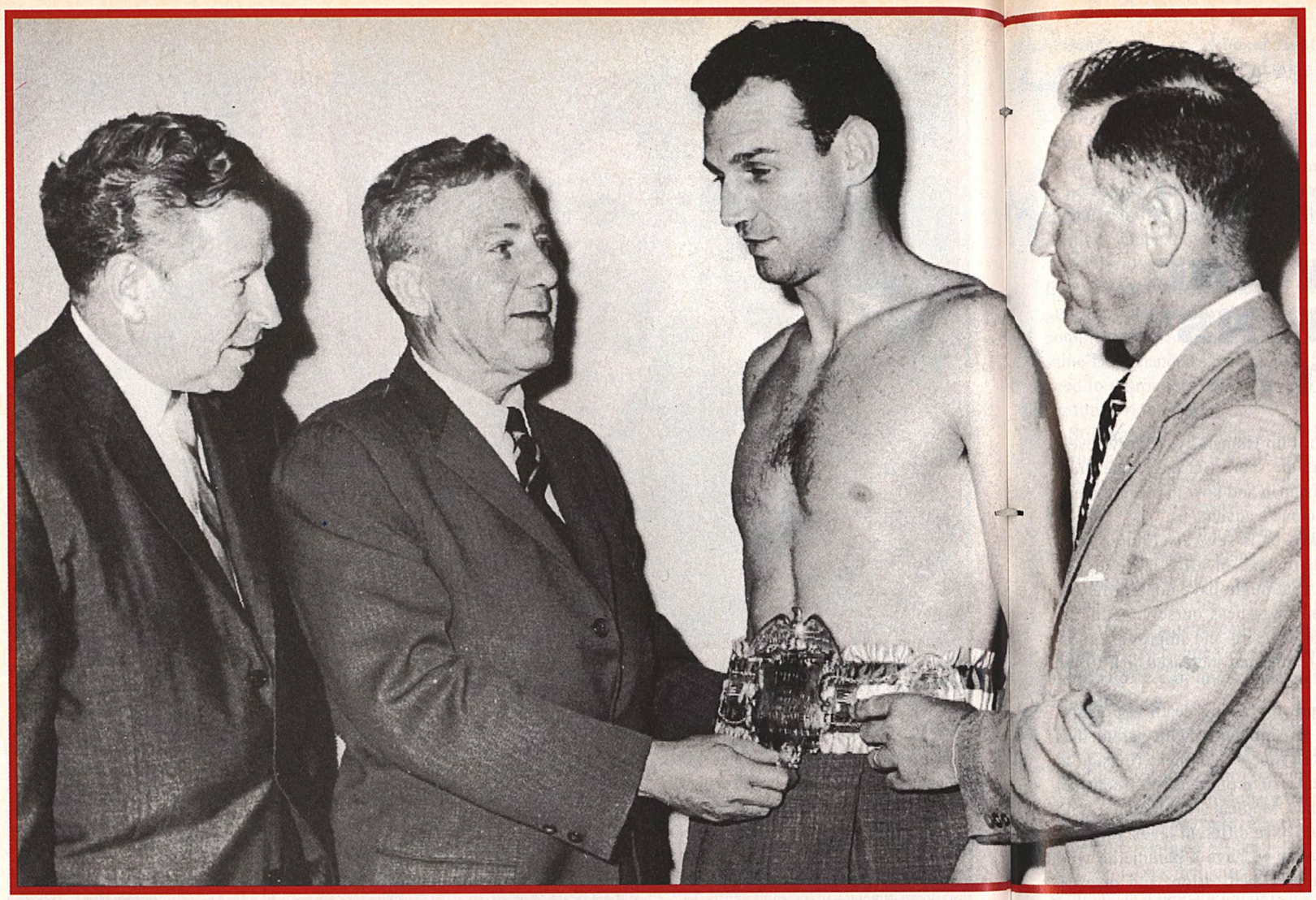
"A guy can't make it big with hands like these," said Paul in the dressing room after the Skinner bout, and once again he was through.

Now he was with the Brookline Fire Department and in all his time with them his one regret was: "Not once in all my time with the hook and ladder boys did we have one four-alarmer." He was referring to the size of fires.

Pender has been a jack of many trades. Recently in his modest second-floor, seven-room apartment, in a gray-shingled house in Brookline, he was waxing philosophic.

"Some of those early days were tough

The first person Pender thanked after beating Robinson was his wife, Rose, who had stuck by him through all the lean years. She is pictured placing a paper crown on her husband's head two days after he won the 160-pound title. Even so, Mrs. Pender refuses to attend her husband's fights.



Pender is presented with THE RING championship belt by writer Jersey Jones, who represented editor Nat Fleischer. Looking on are Massachusetts boxing commissioners Herman Greenberg (fare left) and Tommy Rawson (far right).

ones. I remember being a boxing instructor, let's see, that was back in 1952, when I was a corporal in the Marine Corps at Cherry Point and then at Jacksonville. Even then I was taking it on the chin, and the pay wasn't too much."

Pender may be bitter, but he's not sorry for himself. He lights up with warmth when his two kids, Paul Jr., 5, and Joyce, 2½, are mentioned. As far as he is concerned, it's all been worth his slugging it out with fate.

What brought him back into the ring? When he found he possessed a pair of iron dukes instead of the plaster kind that chipped at every opportunity.

Pender was off duty early one night, and not being averse to a night on the town, invited his wife out to a neighboring hot spot in Everett. It seems that there were three wise guys loitering around the bar. Exactly what was said, to whom, and why, has had several interpretations, no two of which agree. But the fact does remain that Pender walloped hell out of all three with no injury to his hands.

The next act took place in the office of his manager, Johnny Buckley. No novice at his occupation at 74, having guided the ring destinies of two world titleholders, Jack Sharkey and Lou Brouillard, Buckley changed the scene of the meeting upstairs to the gymnasium when he found that Pender's hands were no longer fragile. Pender found himself training for his most recent comeback, the one that led him to the middleweight title.

Pender is no fool. He is articulate, if a little ungrammatical; he is good copy. But his rags to riches yarn and his own colorful personality are not in tune with the way he plies his trade in the ring. He has been less of a crowd-pleaser and more of a cutie than the public likes.

He considers himself lucky that he was able to make it big before he tripped on his own gray beard and did all his swinging from a rocking chair. He knows that he is no Robinson or Archie Moore, who go on like rare old wines for what is seemingly forever.

He wishes that he had a better education, so he had something to turn to this time when he hangs up his gloves. He has experienced what it means to quit the ring without sufficient book learning or trade to turn to. This he knows, and realizing that this is his last trip to the well, he intends to fill up his pail with all the loot hanging around.

An interesting sidelight is how he was discovered by Red Priest, a top Boston fighter a few years back. Priest first saw Pender in a smoker as an amateur, when Priest was acting as a referee. Priest was so interested that he ran all the way back to see Buckley and passed on his feelings: "This kid is a great prospect," said Red. Never one to let money grow underfoot without picking up a cabbage leaf or two, Buckley wasted no time signing up the man whom he has at last led to the middleweight crown.

A good-looking kid who wears his dark hair parted in the middle in typical son of Erin fashion, Pender has often been criticized for his enjoyment of barley corn to which he has avidly stated his denial. His manager, in recent talks, went on record blaming Pender's early losses in the ring to this factor as much as to his bad hands. True or false, Pender proved he was in top physical condition the night he scraped the crown off the aging Robinson's skull.

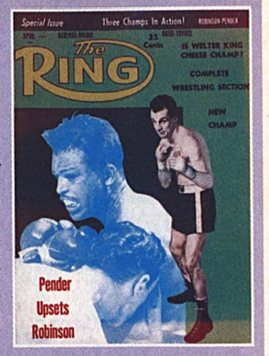
And as far as Pender is concerned, regardless of those bad days when he repeatedly gave up the ring, he feels that those many ring layoffs did him no harm.

"Maybe I haven't made much money up to now, but I've finally made it home and I have all my marbles up here," he said, tapping his head. "If I had been fighting all those years, maybe I wouldn't be able to enjoy what I have now."

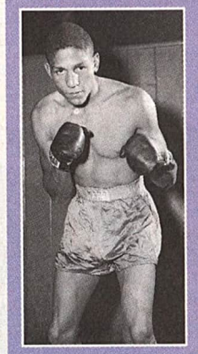
Pender knows that his career must be figured in a few fights, not years, and he is interested in drawing the curtain down on fighting when the time is ripe with the last line reading "and the Penders lived happily ever-after."

ADDENDUM: Pender decisioned Robinson again in June 1960 and made two more successful defenses, against Terry Downes and Carmen Basilio, the following year. He lost the title on a cut-eye TKO to Downs in a July '61 return bout, but regained the title in an April '62 rubber match. That proved to be Pender's final fight. In November, he was stripped of the title by all boxing bodies except the Massachusetts commission because of his reluctance to face Dick Tiger. Disgusted with boxing politics, Pender retired with an overall record of 40-6-2 (20). He died on January 1, 2003, at the age of 72. ■

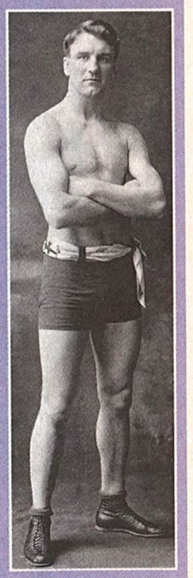
THE RING, April 1960



The Cover: Pender's upset of Ray Robinson to claim a piece of the middleweight crown was the big news of the month. For the New England boxer it was the culmination of a rugged road to the top of the 160-pound heap. Besides his previous inability to get a title shot, Pender had been plagued throughout much of his career with brittle hands, which resulted in several lengthy layoffs.

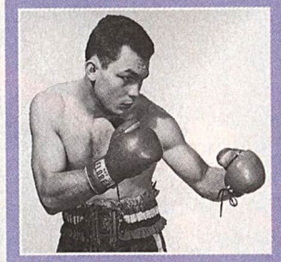


Cheese Camp: Writer Al Buck asked whether or not welterweight champion Don Jordan was a worthy titleholder or just a pretender to the throne. In doing so, Buck looked back at other so-called "cheese champions" such as Al McCoy, Mike O'Dowd, and Al Singer.

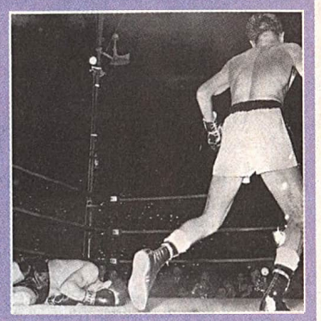


The Ring Detective: Associate Editor Dan Daniel investigates the controversial 1916 bout between Freddy Welsh and Ad Wolgast in which Wolgast retained the lightweight title via foul. Daniels reveals that the villain may well have been Welsh's trainer, Charley Rose.

Ortiz Trashes Title: Shortly after hammering streaking challenger Battling Torres into a 10th-round knockout defeat, junior welterweight champion Carlos Ortiz said, "Nobody cares about junior championships. I'm a lightweight and want to fight for the lightweight title." Ortiz would get his wish in '62, when he beat Joe Brown for the 135-pound belt.



Fighter Of The Month: Mexican Jose Becerra earned the honor with a spectacular knockout of Alphonse Halimi to retain the world bantamweight championship. Becerra axed Halimi in the ninth round with a single left hook to the chin in front of a crowd of 31,830 at the Los Angeles Coliseum.



THE FIGHT DOCTOR

RING TRAGEDY AND THE COMMISSIONS' RESPONSIBILITY

By Margaret Goodman, MD

According to Nevada Athletic Commissioner Dr. Flip Homansky, "Every severe ring injury, and especially a death, is a blow to the sport. But the greater tragedy is if we don't try to understand why they happen and how to prevent them. Ignoring them is to no one's advantage."

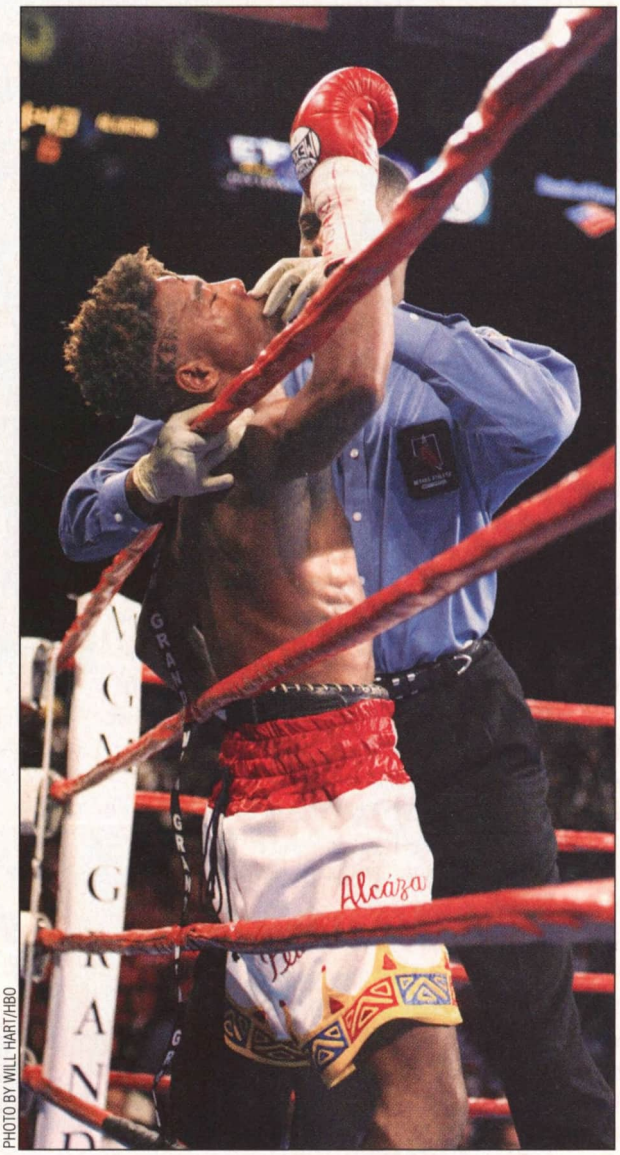


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Can stricter rules prevent ring deaths like that of Pedro Alcazar ?

When a fighter dies or is severely injured, perhaps the most difficult task of all is go over the events and examine what might have done differently. It is painful to second-guess ourselves, but re-evaluation enables us to learn and improve. Ignorance is not bliss, but rather an increased risk to the next contestant.

The best way to prevent a ring death is preparation. There must be an ambulance with paramedics and the necessary emergency equipment ringside at all times. Some venues or promoters will contract just EMTs (Emergency Medical Technicians), and while these individuals have different levels of training, it can be life-saving to have a paramedic who can start IVs, administer medication, and insert a breathing tube.

Inspectors are the eyes and ears of the commission. These individuals stay with the boxer once he comes to the venue until he is medically cleared after the fight. Countless times, inspectors have alerted the ring physician to a fighter with neurological symptoms.

No fight should ever take place without at least two experienced ring physicians there. One doctor must be available to conduct further examinations and administer care after a bout, while the other remains ringside at all times.

Another crucial person is a translator. If a commission member or a physician doesn't understand what a fighter is saying, the job is made even more difficult.

It's also very important to know a fighter's history—where the fighter last fought, whom he fought, the outcome of the bout, his fight frequency, and any medical suspensions he has had.

Weight is a recurrent issue when a fighter suffers

permanent injury. A boxer fighting in an inappropriate weight class or one who had great difficulty making weight could be in danger.

The corner's knowledge of the fighter is also critical. It is difficult to have confidence in the corner's opinion as to when a fight should stop if those individuals have had little or no contact with the fighter beforehand. Lastly, know the fighter's training regimen. It's always an additional concern when a boxer spars countless rounds before a contest.

Medical documentation is another key component. Every commission has medical forms. These must be bilingual (or completed with a translator) and be reviewed for completeness and validity. It is not unheard of to see the same EKG handed in for five different boxers! Physicians need to thoroughly document prefight and postfight exams for future reference.

Still another vital concern is the geographical location of the nearest hospital. Before a venue or location is accepted as a safe place to hold a boxing match, the commission must determine its accessibility for the paramedics, where are the closest exits, and where is the nearest adequate trauma center.

"The Golden Hour" is defined as the time period of 60 minutes in which the lives of a majority of critically injured trauma patients can be saved if definitive surgical intervention is provided. If at all possible, any boxer in trouble should be sent immediately after a fight to a Level One Trauma Center.

Moreover, the responsibilities of the ring physician and executive director include determining effective protocols should a life-threatening emergency occur. If a fighter needs ambulance transportation for neurological symptoms, the ring physician must remain with him until the fighter leaves the confines of the venue with appropriate supervision. Everyone, including the inspectors, should have a role. Without such preparation, precious time could be wasted.

Irrespective of the omnipresent fear of litigation in such situations, immediate involvement of the commission legal counsel is required.

"There has to be a preliminary inquiry by the Executive Officer and Assistant Attorney General, followed by a formal report delivered in closed session to the commission," said Armando Garcia, the new Executive Officer for the California State Athletic Commission. "This should include interviews and statements from all who were present. The film and protocols should be reviewed in addition to an examination of all licensing and medical paperwork."

According to cardiac surgeon and Nevada ring physician Dr. Todd Chapman, we all must face ring tragedies head on. "Honesty is expensive," said Dr. Chapman. "I think you have to face the facts; it is part of the healing process. Shining the light of truth is a way to avoid the same outcome in the future." More often than not officials will find they did the right thing, but self-examination enables you to know more the next time.

The Association of Boxing Commissions met in Las Vegas from July 26 to 30, and medical issues once again came to the forefront. The basic medical requirements for competing were modified, and further medical recommendations were ratified. These minimum requirements were also presented to each of the sanctioning organization representatives to insure that every fighter undergo and pass such testing as a prerequisite for title competition. Under current federal law, the ABC cannot require states or sanctioning organizations to follow these recommendations, but it is the hope of the ABC and the ABC Medical Committee that they will soon become uniform in every jurisdiction.

The Boxing Severity Index *(see sidebar)* was originally presented to the ABC in 2003. The purpose is to objectively identify boxers at risk and insure they are cleared in an appropriate manner. The ABC Medical Committee reintroduced this scale, and five jurisdictions will utilize it on a trial basis over the next few months. Its validity will be tested and then modified according to accuracy in identifying fighters who should raise some concern. Hopefully, it will then be ratified by the ABC for recommended use. Once formalized, Anibal Miramontes of Fight Fax has agreed to include this information in the Fight Fax databank.

Dr. Flip Homansky noted, "The BSI is a tool for regulators and ringside physicians to screen fighters in terms of a closer look. Its intent is not to deny licensure to those who can safely compete. Furthermore, this will be a cost effective research tool and a document that can be modified as it produces data." ■

Dr. Goodman will be happy to answer questions about the medical aspects of boxing in future columns. Please send inquiries to: The Fight Doctor, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034

BOXING SEVERITY INDEX

•Activity (fights in the last 2 years)	
1 (or less)	+1
•Recent Record	
Lost five or more in a row	+2
Lost three of last four	+1
Won three of last four	-1
•Suffered kayo or TKO	
More than four in last two years	+3
Three or less in last two years	+2
Lost last fight by kayo	+1
•Age	
Greater than 44	+2
Greater than 35	+1
•Ring Age	
Greater than 500 rounds	+1
Amateur experience; Each bout equals one pro round	
Greater than five years	+1

A score of +3 and above indicates the fighter needs further clinical evaluation by the commission and their medical advisory board.

Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

THE CRYING GAME

I'm writing to comment on the "Pass The Hankie" letter in the August 2005 issue of THE RING in which reader Rory Dowd states how *The Contender* made him sick because fighters cry so much. I disagree. *The Contender* showed that fighters are human and have feelings. Some people fail to understand that boxers put their heart, soul, blood, and sweat into boxing, and feel as if they have failed when they lose. Remember, Manny Pacquaio cried after his loss to Erik Morales, Fernando Vargas almost cried during the interview before his fight with Raymond Joval, and Felix Trinidad displayed emotion when he beat Oscar De La Hoya. I guess these great warriors are crybabies too.

MATT CHICK
Dover, DE

TAYLOR-HOPKINS REACTION

The Bernard Hopkins-Jermain Taylor decision was an absolute joke. I agree with Hopkins; Taylor did not win a round past the fifth. Or was it the fourth? Either way, the punch stats tell the truth. Isn't it amazing when the champion lands almost 30 more powerpunches than his challenger and still loses? I admire Hopkins' composure after the loss. I would have been livid. I thought Hopkins won the second round and the sixth through the12th

J. SCRUGGS
Memphis, TN

How disappointing it was to see the Bernard Hopkins moan and bitch about being beaten by Jermain Taylor. A truly great champion would have congratulated his opponent and worked harder in the rematch. But Hopkins went on as if it was the biggest robbery since Roy Jones in the 1988 Olympics. Fact is, Taylor deserved the win, and even if the scoring was a little dodgy on one of the judge's scorecards (awarding the last round to Taylor), to me it was hardly a controversial decision.

CHRIS MELIA
Chrismelia03@aol.com

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

The vast majority of the mail THE RING has received since the previous issue has concerned the controversial Taylor-Hopkins fight. Letters, including those from readers J. Scruggs, James Wayland, Ian Hensen, and Jennifer Fabrizio, are running approximately 4-1 against the official decision. Chris Melia represents the minority point of view.

The judges taking the title away from Bernard Hopkins was worse than what happened to Marvin Hagler against Ray Leonard. Taylor does throw a nice shoeshine like Leonard. They don't land, but, oh my, aren't they pretty? Since when did judging become about who is moving their arms more? Yes, Taylor threw more punches early, but I didn't see any

land effectively. Want proof? HBO always shows a montage of exchanges at the end of a telecast. The slow motion showed Taylor throwing wildly and landing zilch. Hopkins, meanwhile, landed right lead after right lead. Ring generalship, defense, effective punching all belonged to Hopkins. Is it enough that the disgustingly biased HBO crew wanted to anoint a new champion? And with Jim Lampley screaming along with the Arkansas crowd every time Taylor so much as farted, I understand why people might get confused. If boxing is about what people *want* to see happen, then I suggest HBO call Vince McMahon!

JAMES WAYLAND
jameswwayland@aol.com

I was disgusted with the decision in the Jermain Taylor-Bernard Hopkins fight. I have seen some horrible decisions in my time, most notably Courtney Burton-Emanuel Augustus. Now the middleweight champion has his titles stolen from him by shoddy judging. I always thought that to take a champ's titles the challenger had to actually take the title from him, not just have it handed to him. Taylor is an excellent fighter, but he did not beat "The Executioner." True, Hopkins didn't dominate, but he did win the fight.

IAN HENSEN
ihensen@yahoo.com

Taylor-Hopkins was a close fight, but Bernard should still be middleweight champion. Aren't so-called veteran judges supposed to know that boxing is about hitting and not getting hit back? Sure, aggressive punchers are exciting, but there are other less crowd-pleasing things going on that should be taken into consideration. For example, Taylor came out very fast and seemed to be having the best of it, but the final punch stats overwhelmingly favored Hopkins. The reason for that is that Hopkins has the defensive skills to make Taylor miss most of his punches. If you don't care for the finer points of boxing, then go watch a Toughman contest—and take Duane Ford with you.

JENNIFER FABRIZIO
jennfab@yahoo.com

EXHILERATING FEELING

I was lucky enough to go to the Jean-Marc Mormeck-Wayne Braithwaite card, and the Luis Collazo-Jose Rivera fight was one of the most intense spectacles I have ever seen. Being among 9,000 people screaming and hollering was scary at times, but the feeling of going to a professional fight is something every single fight fan should experience.

MIKE ABELSON
Methuen, MA

UNIMPRESSIVE PROSPECT

I recently saw the fight between young prospect Jason Litzau and John Nolasco on ESPN2, and was not impressed at all with Litzau's performance. Litzau was open for counters all night against a supposedly lesser skilled fighter, and his penchant for brawling was encouraged by his idiotic corner, which is not a good sign. After the fight, Litzau danced around as if he just got engaged to Jessica Alba, and then bragged that he

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

It seems that heavyweight Samuel Peter has really struck a cord with fans, and he has also generated quite a bit of mail. But perhaps none of the Peter letters has explained the Nigerian heavyweight's appeal as succinctly as that written by Jeff Bollinger.

was willing to endure broken noses and cut eyes to win. Once he steps up in competition, he won't be disappointed.

AARON S. BAYLEY
Toronto, Ontario

GUILTY PLEASURE

I feel like a sadist every time I watch Samuel Peter fight. I watch the Indy 500 the same way.

JEFF BOLLINGER
schlup@earthlink.net

HALL WORTHY?

I agree with Jeff Ryan ("Ryan Out Loud," THE RING EXTRA, August 2005). Barry McGuigan doesn't belong in the Hall of Fame. How did he get in ahead of more established featherweight champions Danny Lopez and Antonio Esparragoza? I hope that the International Boxing Hall of Fame gets its act together. It seems like every year they put in an undeserving fighter in the Hall. I'm not talking about fighters you can make a legitimate case for being great or not. I'm talking about fighters such as McGuigan, Sugar Ramos, Ismael Laguna, and Jose Torres. They were decent fighters at best.

ALLEN MORRIS
Belle River, Ontario ■

LOOKING AHEAD

By Joe Santoliquito

NOT MANY BELIEVE IN JONES ... EXCEPT TARVER

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Tarver says Jones is still a dangerous foe

The scoffing comments from the boxing cognoscenti rang out as soon as the announcement was made: **Roy Jones** is fighting again—and against **Antonio Tarver**, the light heavyweight champion of the world.

What is Jones thinking? Is this man, who many believed avoided the best 175-pounders when he was considered the top pound-for-pound fighter in the world, suddenly suffering from a lapse in judgment? Or did Tarver and **Glen Johnson** knock all of the sense out of Jones when they handed him consecutive kayo defeats?

For the first time in his career, Jones will be a heavy underdog when he faces Tarver for the third time, in an HBO Pay-Per-View fight, on October 1, at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas. It was Tarver who blasted away Jones' seemingly invincible veneer when he stopped him in two rounds on May 15, 2004.

Not many think Jones, 49-3 (38), has a chance this time, and some even wonder whether or not he will be capable of leaving the ring under his own power once Tarver has finished with him. Those opinions are not only bolstered by the second Tarver-Jones fight, but also by the devastating ninth-round knockout Jones suffered against Johnson on September 25, 2004.

But there is one Jones supporter who insists this fight is not as easy as it looks, somebody who actually may be even more delusional about Jones' diminished skills than Jones himself—*Tarver*, of all people.

"I'm not going to take Roy lightly, even though everyone wants me to take him lightly," said Tarver, 23-3 (18). "I don't even want to hear that. I'll be training for Roy Jones as if he's still 25. This is a real fight. Roy still has dreams about being light heavyweight champion again.

"Roy has been on top of the world all this time. Why not respect the man? A desperate man is a dangerous man. Roy Jones understands that this is it. If he loses, he's done, and he knows it. People still feel I hit him with a lucky punch. I think I won both fights, but in the record book, we both won one fight each. This script really couldn't be written any better, what with all the great trilogies and the changing of the guard that has to happen. He's making an attempt to vindicate himself."

Tarver speculated that possibly Jones saw something he could take advantage of in Tarver's last two fights, against Johnson, when he lost then regained the world light heavyweight championship. Another point "The Magic Man" broached was that it was Jones who went to HBO and asked for a third Tarver fight.

"This is the same Roy Jones who people said was avoiding everyone, and he sought *me* out," said Tarver, who will be receiving purse parity for this fight. "I hear it all the time that Roy Jones is supposed to be finished, but Jones is no cakewalk. I have to give the man respect. He's a boxing legend and he has the same skills he's always had. I want to introduce Roy when he's inducted into the Hall of Fame, and then I'll be in there right behind him. This is about my legacy."

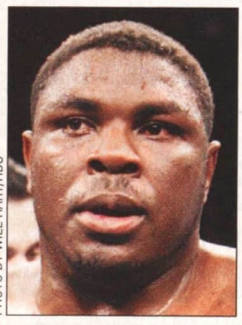


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Peter is looking to prove himself against Wladimir

LISTEN UP

An intriguing match has been made between a heavyweight trying to prove himself—**Samuel Peter**—and another heavyweight *still* trying to prove himself—**Wladimir Klitschko**. The fight is scheduled for September 24 at Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall and will be televised by HBO. Klitschko, 44-3 (40), will reportedly earn $1.025-million plus a percentage of the German TV rights. Peter, 24-0 (21), will reportedly earn a career-high $900,000 ... October is a busy month, with Tarver-Jones III followed by the **Diego Corrales-Jose Luis Castillo** rematch the next weekend, on October 8. Corrales-Castillo II will be aired by Showtime PPV and emanate from the Thomas and Mack Center in Las Vegas. Another great rematch will highlight the Corrales-Castillo undercard, matching flyweights **Jorge Arce** against **Hussein Hussein**. ■

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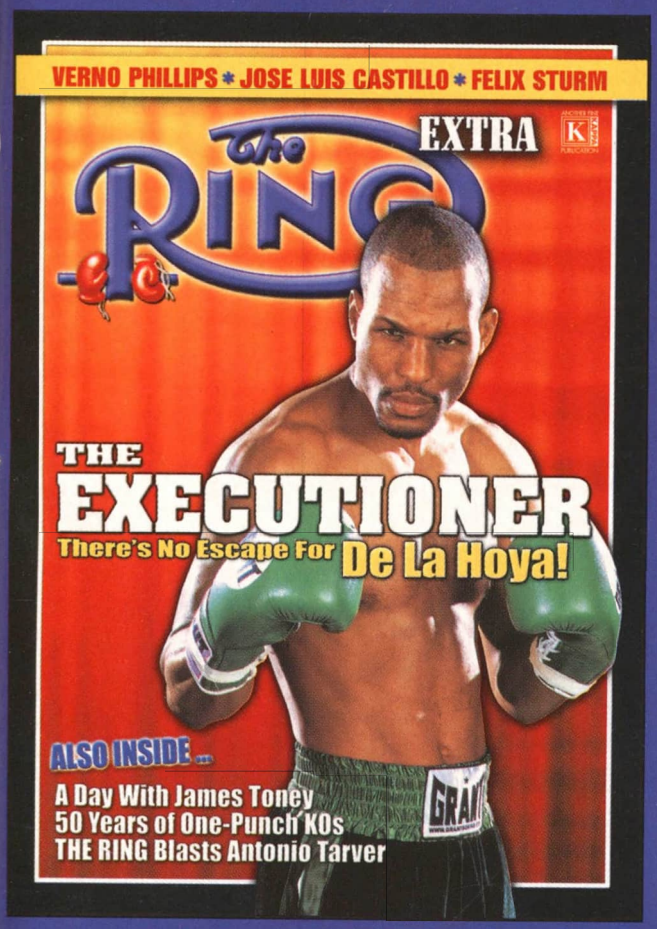

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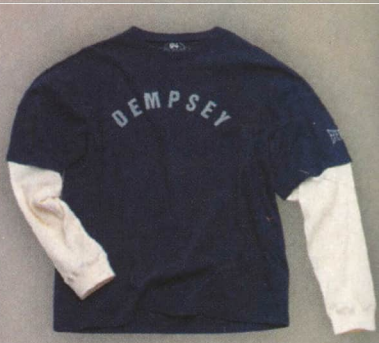

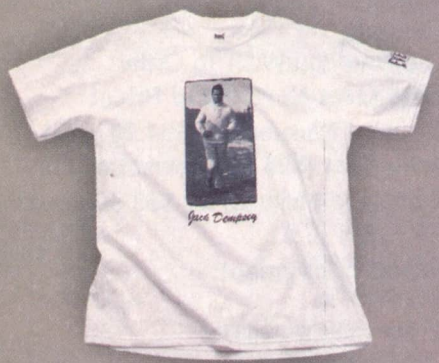

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